

# obey Them That Have the Rule Over You?



## IMPORTANCE NOTICE:

**If you wish to read the Greek and Hebrew characters employed in this essay, you must download (free) the Greek and Hebrew fonts listed on my home page.**

**Thrust statement:** Elders are to lead, not dictate.

**Scripture reading:** [Hebrews 13:17](#).

## INTRODUCTION

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you ([Hebrews 13:17](#)).<sup>[1]</sup>

This essay seeks to explore the role of leaders within the Christian community of the Churches of Christ. In this investigation, the objective is to analyze the function of power seized by many leaders/elders/preachers/editors within the Churches of Christ and also to look into the key Scriptures cited by the select few for their justification of dictatorial powers. There is a positive side of leadership as well as a negative side. This paper seeks to look at both sides from a biblical perspective. On the downbeat trait, the person in charge is dictatorial; on the upbeat quality, the guide is a model to be imitated in his/her daily walk with God. On the negative side, the leader is viewed as ruler, boss, director, executive, manager, chief, and master. However, on the positive side, the leader is viewed as guide, advisor, beacon, counselor, teacher, lighthouse, and guidepost.

## **LEADERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

### **Dictatorial Leadership**

The question that confronts many sincere Christians is: Is biblical submission blind obedience to whatever the leaders believe the Bible teaches? Or does biblical surrender to the leaders negate allegiance to Christ in every facet of one's life? Can the leaders stand in judgment for another's actions? Or does each person give an account to God for his/her own dealings? Are there any infallible interpreters in the Churches of Christ? These are questions that everyone must deal with in his/her own life. Is your faith in the leaders? Or is your faith in God? Which? Are leaders infallible interpreters of God's Word? Are Christians responsible to God for their actions? Are Christians to blindly follow whatever the leaders tell them to do or believe?

Has God authorized high-ranking individuals to occupy a tyrannical position within the Christian community? It is not uncommon for elders, within the Churches of Christ, to hire or dismiss preachers without the consent of the congregation. Once they make the decision, then that judgment is final—no recourse, case closed. Can elders appoint other elders without the consent of the congregation? This scenario happened recently in a congregation in Birmingham, AL. As a result of high-handedness, the body of Christ split. Has God endorsed a select few to exercise lordship over the consciences of other believers? Are believers to unscrew their heads and let a certain group of men behave as a board of directors? When the board of administrators interprets Scripture, should one accept their views as *ex cathedra*? Is it sinful for one to disagree with the chosen shepherds and still remain within the fellowship of God's people, that is to say, the local congregation? Does God require blind conformity? Is one to be fully persuaded according to the thinking of the elders/preachers/evangelist,

regardless as to what they teach? Or should Christians exercise some judgment in keeping with their own minds? Do the Scriptures teach a sort of sightless submission?[2]

The positive aspects of leadership promote responsible direction in order to encourage others to put forward a life dedicated to holy living. There is a need for older men to give guidance in the way of devoutness (see [Hebrews 13:1-17](#)). Leaders need to encourage Christians through their trials and tribulations. The church needs godly men to train other Christians to become soldiers for Jesus Christ in the conversion of the world.

### Congregational Leadership

This composition is not written to castigate holy men in their roles as servants of Christ nor is this essay written to deny that congregations need leadership. Rather this paper is concerned with “power religion.” Power religion is the same thing as exercising lordship over God’s children. Lording it over people is spiritual abuse. Peter warns leaders not to engage in such high-handed tactics:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording (*katakuriouvontes*, *katakuriuontes*) it over those entrusted to you, but being examples (*tupoi*, *tupoi*) to the flock ([1 Peter 5:1-3](#)).

Peter wants the elders to be models or patterns to the flock, not individuals who lord it over the ones entrusted to them. Since there is a trend among some leaders that Christians are to give blind obedience to whatever they teach, then this issue of the proper role of leadership must be dealt with. Some leaders assume the role of Pope in their relationship to the people. It is wrong for leaders to bind their interpretations upon other Christians.[3] The philosophy of “individual non-responsibility” advanced by many leaders is unbiblical. Leaders are not infallible interpreters. Every person should search the Scriptures for himself/herself and draw his/her own conclusions based upon the context (See [Romans 14:1—15:7](#)).

Paul sets an example of this kind of reasoning in his letter to the Christians at Rome and Corinth. There were many differences over doctrinal matters within the congregation at Rome. Some of the believers were correct in their interpretation of the issues discussed in [Romans 14](#) and some were wrong. But both were wrong when they tried to impose their views upon other believers. Thus, Paul dealt with diversity of opinions this way:

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The

man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand (**Romans 14:1-4**).

Paul did not say that the shepherds were to enforce the correct interpretation dealing with “disputable matters.” The person with deficiency in understanding is still acceptable to God. Paul says “no” to judging: “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?” (**14:4**). But is that all Paul says about this issue of unity in diversity? Again, the answer is “no.” Listen once more to Paul as he speaks of the standing of individuals with imperfection in their knowledge: “To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (**14:4**). Some of the Christians wanted to force their own views in these matters of differences, but again Paul says, “no”: “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind” (**Romans 14:5**). He concludes his discussion about diversity this way: “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (**15:7**). Has God accepted you with imperfection in your life? Has God accepted you with imperfection in your understanding? If so, then Paul says that believers should “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

Not only did Paul deal with unity in diversity with the church at Rome, but he also had to address this issue of how Christians should react when some defect in knowledge is quite apparent to the know-it-alls. He begins his treatise on the sacrificing of foods to idols: “Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge” (**1 Corinthians 8:1**). In other words, it is true that some understood the issues very clearly while others did not comprehend. Paul admits this up front. But he does not drop the ball with that statement. He goes on to say: “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (**8:1**). It is not uncommon for Christians who think they know everything to manifest an attitude of aloofness toward those whose knowledge does not measure up to theirs. Paul goes right to the heart of this problem: “Knowledge puffs up.” For Paul, if one loves others in spite of differences, then, this condescension is the outcome of love—“love builds up.”

Paul nips this know-it-all-attitude in the bud. He writes: “The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know” (**8:2**). Christians are in a state of growth. But Paul does not want Corinthians to make a test of fellowship out of spiritual digestion. What does matter is the state of the heart. Again, Paul points out that that which is acceptable to God is love for God: “But the man who loves God is known by God” (**8:2**). One may be deficient in knowledge but, at the same time, if one loves God, then, this individual is the one to whom God extends His love.<sup>[4]</sup>

If there were elders in the congregation at Corinth, they were not advised to take a negative action against the weak but rather to love them.

Paul later wrote Titus on the procedures to follow if a person became divisive: “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned” (**Titus 3:10-11**). This warning would apply to any of God’s children—leaders or lay people. If one is not willing to follow the counsel of Paul to the Romans and the Corinthians, then Paul says that one should have nothing to do with the disruptive person—none are excluded, which includes elders, preachers, and editors of Christian journals. The so-called ruling class does not frequently heed this warning; they themselves become very troublesome when they do not get their way. They themselves are frequently divisive. Unseeing submission on the part of the congregation discourages personal accountability to God; this sightless resignation is not a mark of true Christian maturity. Raymond Brown is perfectly right when he insists, “The Christian is answerable to Christ alone.”[\[5\]](#)

## **CONTROVERSY AND MISUNDERSTANDING OF BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP**

Much of the controversy and misunderstanding concerning the proper role leaders play within the local body of believers revolves around an interpretation of **Hebrews 13:17**: “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.” Many well-meaning leaders to substantiate their dictatorial leadership with the Churches of Christ, as well as of many other Christian ecclesiastical structures, quote this passage. Many godly men cite this Scripture with almost literal crudeness. Certain Scriptures, on first reading, appear to uphold the position many leaders advance within the local congregation. But before one offers an interpretation, one should consult the context. One goal of any interpreter should be to ascertain what the original writer sought to communicate through his use of words.

The arguments that are usually advanced to maintain lordship over the congregation are so fragile that one is reluctant to let too much credence rest upon them. Nevertheless, because of current arguments advanced by a few, this subject of authority exercised by a small number of leaders must be dealt with. Part of the problem today is that the traditions of the church sometimes make it difficult, is not impossible, to read the Bible without “glasses.” Truth is too often the projection of the particular views and interests of the powerful. The powerful, often times, have difficulty in hearing God accurately. The “faith of the fathers” becomes the watchword of orthodoxy. Without intending to, “we bring our theological heritage, our ecclesiastical traditions, our cultural norms, or our existential concerns to the Epistles as we read them.”[\[6\]](#) The words of Jesus should ring loud and clear: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (**Revelation 3:6**).[\[7\]](#)

In seeking an answer to the phrase, “Obey them that have the rule over you” (**Hebrews 13:17**, KJV),[\[8\]](#) every interpreter must initially pursue the meaning intended for the original audience. Too often Christians find

things in biblical narratives that are not really there (eisegesis); they read *into* the Bible their own notions rather than read *out of* (exegesis) the Bible what God wants them to know. Christians should not be “monkey-see-monkey-do” readers of Holy Scripture. God’s words are to be found in the intent of His Revelation, not man’s interpretation of His Word.

Since words operate within a context and receive meaning from that context, then an exegete (interpreter) must recognize that words can change from situation to situation. Words do not automatically have meaning; they receive meaning from their author. To make the text say something that the author did not propose is to abuse the text. The message of the passage cannot be properly interpreted in isolation from the historical context. As a result of misreading the text, it is not uncommon for leaders to labor under the impression that God has given them authority over other Christians. Their voices are equated with the Word of God. Their interpretations are identified with Scripture. No one is allowed to be “fully convinced in his own mind” ([Romans 14:5](#)). But the evidence does not support the traditional attitude and position maintained by many elders. It is imperative that Christians learn to reevaluate and reinterpret what has been handed down to them through the years.

## **Ultimatums of Conformity Issued**

### **By Many Religious Leaders**

It is not exceptional for leaders (elders and preachers) to issue an ultimatum to other Christians who do not concur with their particular brand of orthodoxy to either shape up or ship out. The rule of thumb is: one must submit, never question. One is not allowed to disagree with the so-called leadership and still remain within the fellowship of the local community. In order to justify such ungodly behavior by the leaders, the nonconformist (one that thinks for himself/herself) is often referred to as “not sound in the faith.”

This mind-set is especially true within the various factions that exist within the Churches of Christ (at least twenty-five or more divisions). One’s acceptability depends on the position that one maintains concerning the following issues: one’s understandings about divorce and remarriage, instrumental music in the so-called worship service, the use of the Sunday school versus the non-Sunday school position, individual communion cups versus the one-cup practice, the Scripturalness of Bible colleges, the support of orphan homes, views on the return of Christ (premillennial), handclapping in the assembly, solo singing in the assembly, and so on. Christians are not allowed freedom to decide for themselves; the beliefs espoused by certain individuals must coincide with partisan leadership.

The subject of divorce and remarriage has wrought havoc within the body of Christ. If one divorces without the approval of leadership, then warnings are issued concerning their marital status. In other words, the eldership can issue an ultimatum—divorce and remain celibate or face dire

consequences—ostracism. The leadership determines whether one should remain single, or if remarried, whether one can remain married. Whatever leadership decides, the people must obey without question. For one not to obey the elders is tantamount to not obeying God. No one is allowed to disagree with the “chosen few” without incurring the wrath of God, at least according to the leaders. The dictatorial powers are not limited just to this one issue—divorce and remarriage—but it can be applied to any position that the leadership decides upon.

## **Sightless Conformity Demanded**

### **By Some Leaders**

A host of Christian leaders today teach sightless conformity to their biblical interpretations. The kind of concord demanded by many church leaders—elders, preachers, and editors of religious journals—is not the same intent of the author of Hebrews. Many church leaders today—not all—have the concept of compliance that demands conformity and resignation to party orthodoxy. The battle cry is: submit or be kicked out of the synagogue. This attitude is the same mindset of the religious leaders in Jesus’ day. As a result of the misuse of the Greek text, recent scholarship has focused on this issue of “obey” and its semantic<sup>[9]</sup> meaning. According to Owen L. Crouch, the “verb means ‘persuade.’ When you persuade yourself you obey. . . . They are not dictators over your spirits but are ‘leaders’ for your lives.”<sup>[10]</sup> Another scholar, Philip Hughes, is perfectly right when he insists: “The authority our author is commending must not be confused with authoritarianism.”<sup>[11]</sup> It is in this same vein that Leon Morris draws attention to the fact that “authority” is not a part of the Greek text. For instance, he writes:

The readers are to be obedient to their leaders. In v. 7 the leaders were men who had died. Here, however, those alive and currently in places of authority are meant (At the same time we should perhaps notice that there is nothing in the Gr. to correspond to NIV’s ‘their authority’).<sup>[12]</sup>

Thus, Schuyler English, too, explains: “It is self-evident, or should be, that such obedience will not be in the form of blind and unqualified compliance with the whims of self-appointed authority.”<sup>[13]</sup> Why did the author of **Hebrews** write **verses 7** and **17** in **chapter 13**? Just a casual glance of the Book as a whole seems to convey the author’s appeal to the believers who had previously responded to the good news of God not to return to legalism, that is, Judaism. The new covenant demands, even as the old covenant, high moral standards, but at the same time, the new covenant does not involve Mosaic rituals, holy days, and formalities. In other words, the new covenant with God through Jesus Christ is internal, not external ritualism of animal sacrifices. He draws attention to the crucifixion of Jesus, but, in doing this, he cautions them about the possibility of crucifying the Son of God afresh by returning to Judaism.



He wants the Hebrews to continue to trust in Jesus as God's atonement for the sins of humanity. Not only does he want these believers to turn to Him for salvation, but he also wants them to lay aside every sin that causes one to stumble so easily. This faithfulness to Jesus is what [verses 7 and 17](#) are all about in [chapter 13](#) of [Hebrews](#). Listen once more to the author of Hebrews:

Keep on loving each other as brothers. <sup>2</sup> Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. <sup>3</sup> Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. <sup>4</sup> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. <sup>5</sup> Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" <sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. <sup>9</sup> Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. <sup>10</sup> We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. <sup>11</sup> The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup> And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. <sup>13</sup> Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. <sup>14</sup> For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. <sup>15</sup> Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. <sup>16</sup> And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. <sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you ([Hebrews 13:1-17](#)).

### **Letter to Dallas Burdette from Abused Preacher**

This author recently received (December 23, 2001) a letter from a brother who has suffered tremendously from abusive power exerted by the powerful. I am withholding this brother's name in order to protect him, as much as possible, from the powers that be. As one reads his letter, one can sympathize with the abuse he has received from individuals who have mistreated him—all in the name of faithfulness to the Word of God. Listen



to this brother as he describes his encounter within the Churches of Christ. He writes about his pilgrimage of faith as he left the Baptist movement to work among the Churches of Christ:

Dear Brother Dallas:

First, I want to sincerely apologize for my apparent poor demeanor in my E-Mails to you. I ask that you forgive me of this wrong! Permit me to briefly explain that I came amongst the churches of Christ meek, humble, rejoicing & happy. In a matter of a few short months I had been torn to shreds, me & my wife & family. The radical “anti’s” looked at every corner for anything of disagreement they could find to beat me with. I endured it for a time, confusedly. Yet, after a while I figured I had to take up for myself & defend myself. This has been a constant fight for me now for over 3 years. As you know, & as you stated in one of your E-Mails, if one does not line up & agree with them on EVERY single point then one is a false teacher & open game. They totally refuse a personal thinker & do everything in their power to gang up & kill him! I’m sure you know exactly what I am talking about. My growing up in a religion that held the Ministry in high esteem & reverence into the Church of Christ who are the total opposite was a tremendous shock, to say the least! This is what led to the writing of my book. I am a child of God that has been beat up on so much that I have so much anger & hostility in my heart for church of Christ people. I am a Preacher walking around with a chip on his shoulder ready at any time to fight, as I have been made to react. I am sorry that I have become this way. It’s like if a father or mother literally beats their child it will turn out to beat others as well because that’s how they have had to learn to react. I am not the man I use to be prior to entering the Church of Christ denomination. I don’t know if I’ll rebound back from it! It appears that the “knee-jerk reaction” I spoke to you about just happens to be me! I ask for your forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

I totally enjoy your writings. You work very hard & I am proud to have them in my library. Thank you so much. Brother Dallas, I want to go to heaven, I want to love the Lord & His people. I want to serve Him & them all the days of my life. Yet, I must somehow work through this bitterness. I ask for your humble prayers on this behalf. Dallas, behind all this bitterness, hatred, evil, & paranoia is a kind-hearted child of Christ who loves Him with all his heart.

My God truly & richly bless you & yours with happiness & long life in His service.

## **DALLAS BURDETTE VERSUS ELDERSHIP**

### **Membership in Local Congregation**

As one reflects back on the KJV rendering of [Hebrews 13:17](#), one is confronted with the words: “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give

account.” Many Christian leaders read this verse with wooden literalness. Several years ago, this author (Dallas Burdette) sought to place membership with one of the local congregations in Montgomery, AL. This particular fellowship of believers was associated with the Stone/Campbell Movement of the nineteenth-century. This group identified itself as a Church of Christ. Once I had made known my desire to place membership and work within this congregation, the elders informed me that they would need to meet with me before they could give their consent. I agreed to this meeting, but they informed me that this would have to be done on a Wednesday evening during the congregation’s regular Bible study groups. They refused to come to my home or allow me to meet with them in their homes. This meeting, since it occurred on Wednesday evening, only lasted for about thirty minutes.

I finally agreed to meet with this board of directors—commonly called eldership—to discuss my becoming a member of this local congregation. After going to the office of the pulpit minister, we all set around a conference table. Then, the meeting began like this: “We understand that you have a problem with obeying them that have the rule over you.” Ultimately, they wanted to exercise mind control over me. I was informed that they would accept me on certain conditions. The conditions were: (1) You cannot invite members of this congregation into your home if you have certain individuals visiting you, namely, Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett; and (2) You can never give any religious journal or book to any member of this congregation without our approval.

I found this extremely interesting, especially the one about not giving books to anyone without the permission of the “ruling elders.” One of the “ruling elders” owned one of the largest Christian bookstores in the South. He could sell the books, but I could not give them away without his permission. This group wanted to place a “gag order” on my writings or the writings of other men. This group of elders practiced mind control, which is totally unbiblical. These leaders sought to coerce me into accepting their views as infallible, even though some later changed their views on the divorce and remarriage issues that they adamantly argued against me at the time. My views, at the time, were also a bone of contention with these men. Later (several years later), one of the elders who fought my membership in the congregation changed his views concerning the divorce and remarriage controversy. He requested that I write a paper on this subject, which I did.

[\[14\]](#)

### **Mind Control Sought By Elders**

Another encounter occurred several years earlier than the aforementioned encounter with the board of directors. In this congregation, I expressed some views, while teaching a Bible class, on the marriage and divorce debate that did not coincide with the “ruling class.” One of the elders came to me and informed me: “You are never to tell anyone anything in this congregation that disagrees with what the elders have said.” Once more, one is confronted with the “obey them that have the rule over you.”

This is the same congregation that called in a preacher from Atlanta, GA to get the congregation back on track—in spite of the fact that many members objected. After his arrival, he and the elders, one evening, raided the library and confiscated all of the books that I had donated to the Church, which had been previously approved by the same elders. These books were then placed under lock-and-key. The members were not allowed to read them. One of the deacons found out that I picked up my books, but he was never told that, prior to my asking for my books back, the leadership impounded the books to protect its members. Again, one witnesses the cult mentality of mind control on the part of leadership.[\[15\]](#)

## **DALLAS BURDETTE VERSUS CHRISTIANITY UNIVERSITY**

### **Essays Banned**

Mind control is the major key to keeping its membership under control. One of the major Christian universities in Montgomery, AL also plays the identical mind control game that elders, preachers, and editors of religious journal exercise—agree or face excommunication or refusal to allow one on the faculty. The President of this particular university issued an executive order that my essays could no longer be required reading by the professors. Prior to this executive order, many of my essays were required reading. After my papers were placed on the prohibited list, I was not even allowed to photocopy papers—not even essays written by others—for the professors. This same Christian refused to allow me on the faculty because I would not write a paper condemning instrumental music.[\[16\]](#) Is this brother sincere? I suspect that he is. He, like so many of us, allows traditions to mold one's thinking. These leaders place themselves, not self-consciously, on a level with God. For one to disagree with leadership, then this is the same as disagreeing with God.

### **Letter from Bill Smith (An Elder)**

In spite of the Matthean account of Jesus' rebuke of superiority among the disciples, nevertheless, Christians still cite [Hebrews 13:7](#), [17](#), and [24](#) to substantiate dictatorial, magisterial, authoritarian, totalitarian, and domineering obedience in the absolute. One is still confronted by the demand of some leaders (elders, preachers, and editors of religious journals) to demand blind obedience to group leaders. Having said this, this statement is not a blanket castigation of all religious leaders. This author (Dallas Burdette) received an email (December 25, 2001) from an elder (Bill Smith, Jr.), who is one of the leaders in a congregation in Louisiana. He writes:

Dallas, as you do your paper on “authority” and Hebrews 13:17, you can quote this elder as saying no mere human has authority over another Christian. As an elder, I have inordinate influence, but I have no raw authority to command anyone! Most men who want to argue authority do so because they have little or no influence among God's people that allows them to lead. Therefore, they want to command. Of course, they do consider

themselves to be benefactors for the peoples good, don't they? This authority thing in my opinion is another of those hangovers from Catholicism. It grieves me that men want to rule rather than serve. This after Jesus made it so clear that his disciples were not to function as the world's rulers. Do a good job on your paper. Our fellowship really needs to reinvestigate Christian leadership.[\[17\]](#)

## **HEBREWS 13:17 EMPLOYED BY MANY LEADERS TO ENFORCE CONFORMITY TO ORTHODOXY OF ITS PARTICULAR FACTION**

As stated above, the Scripture that is cited to uphold the traditional position of the authority of elders (leadership) within the Churches of Christ is **Hebrews 13:17**. Many Christians read this Scripture and automatically identify this passage as authority for insisting that the elders are to be obeyed *in toto* (completely, fully, entirely, utterly). When one reads this verse without spectacles, one is immediately confronted with the awareness that this Scripture does not mention the word *elders*. In fact, the word that the Hebrews author employs is the word *leaders* (ἡγούμενοι, &hgoumenois, “to lead,” “leading ones”). Even though leaders may include elders, nevertheless, this text does not indicate who the leaders were.

When one interprets **Hebrews 13:17** to teach that Christians must blindly “obey the elders,” then this kind of reading reads too much into the words of this text. Within many segments of the Restoration Movement, this Scripture has led to the crystallization of error concerning the role of leaders within the body of Christ. Raymond Brown draws attention to the negative interpretation foisted upon this passage:

The writer is not inculcating blind, unthinking obedience to everything a Christian teacher says, otherwise there would be little point in issuing the warning he has just given about ‘diverse and strange’ doctrines. In the New Testament there is clear recognition that discernment is obviously necessary and also that obedience to the revealed word of God is essential.[\[18\]](#)

### **King James Version: Creation of Much Confusion**

Some of the confusion exists as a result of the King James Version. The word and phrase that contribute to the confusion are: “obey,” and “rule over you.” The English word *obey* is the translation of πεισθω (peiqw), and the words *rule over you* originate from the Greek word ἡγούμενος (&goumenos). This essay will explore the use of these two Greek words in order to ascertain the true intent of the author. It appears, so it seems to this author (Dallas Burdette), that the words *obey* (even though a correct translation) and *rule over you* are too strong and, thus, do not convey accurately the nuance intended by the author. The traditional emphasis upon the word *obey* contradicts other plain teachings as expounded by Jesus to

His disciples. Also, the English phrase “rule over you” does not carry the sense contemplated by the originator of this Epistle.

The English translation seems to infer a hierarchy within the church, that is to say, a pyramid structure with laity at the bottom and various levels of leadership going to the top of the pyramid. Does the Greek text substantiate this kind of interpretation upon πειψθω (peiqw, “persuade”) and ηςγεψομαι, (&hgeomai, “to lead”? As stated above, Matthew records a conversation between Jesus and His disciples about leadership. The disciples were arguing about positions of power. To this Jesus responds by saying:

<sup>25</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.” <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

The word *rulers* is from the Greek word α[ρχοντῆ (archontes, which is from α[ρχων, arcwn, “ruler” or “chief”). Then the words “lord it over” are from the Greek word κατακυριευουσιν (katakurieusousin, which is from κατακυριεψω, katakurieuw, “to exercise dominion over”). And finally, the words “exercise authority over” are from the Greek word κατεξουσιάζουσιν (katexousizousin, which is from κατεξουσιάζω, katexousiazw, “to exercise authority over”). These words employed by Jesus in His conversation stands in stark contrast to what the author of Hebrews is reputed to have written. The author of Hebrews did not use α[ρχων, arcwn, “ruler” or “chief,” or κατακυριεψω, katakurieuw, “to exercise dominion over,” but rather he uses the word ηςγεψομαι (&geomai, “to lead”). The Greek text in [Hebrews 13:17](#) does not substantiate the prevailing error (“rule over you”) advanced by many elders and preachers within the Churches of Christ. In fact, the general interpretation contradicts what Jesus says in [Matthew 20:25-28](#).

Before advancing into an analysis of [Hebrews 13:17](#), one’s attention is called to another Scripture that is relied upon to uphold the so-called “authority” of the elders. Paul’s statement in [1 Timothy 5:17](#) is also utilized by many sincere Christians to maintain the status quo of the Churches of Christ. Paul writes: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (KJV). The NIV translates: “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.” The Greek word προεστωτῆ (proestwtes, which is from προι; στημι, proisthmi, “to manage,” “to direct”). *The Message* translation translates this way: “Give a bonus to leaders who do a good job, especially the ones who work hard at preaching and teaching.”[\[19\]](#)

### King James and the Divine Right of Kings

The divine right of Kings, as maintained by King James, rings loud and clear in the translation of Holy Scripture.<sup>[20]</sup> King James wanted his subjects to “obey” him and his appointed bishops. It appears that the KJV has not seized upon the shade of meaning intended by Paul. The Greek word *proisthmi* may be translated as “direct” or “manage,” which communicates the idea of “to lead” or “to care for,” not “to rule.” The context of **First Timothy** does not exhibit the concept of the ruler and the ruled. This word will be dealt with more fully later in this essay. It is also worthy of note that Paul in his second epistle to Corinth addresses this very issue of “lording it over” God’s children: “Not that we lord it over (κυριευομεν *kurieuomen*) your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm” (**2 Corinthians 1:24**). But for the time being, it is necessary to draw attention to a more exhaustive study of the English words *obey*, and *rule over you*.

### **King James and the Cult of the Bishops**

As one peruses the King James’ rendering of these Scriptures in Hebrews, it appears, at least it seems this way to this author, to be a deliberate attempt by those who were in power (King James [1603-1625] and his bishops) to strengthen their hold on usurped authority, an authority traced all the way back to Henry the Eighth (1509-1547)—the divine right of Kings. According to the author of Hebrews, the “ones leading you” were not to be tyrannical in their leadership, but they were to assume the role of servants. In other words, it is not “sightless” allegiance that is spoken of in **Hebrews 13:7, 17, and 24**, but rather submission to the principles of holiness as exemplified in the lives of the leaders.

Regrettably, the translators of the King James Version did not capture the mood of the Greek text precisely. If the author of Hebrews wished to communicate the proposal of “rulership,” he could have employed other words to transmit this impression. As stated earlier, the Greek word for “lord it over” is noticeably not present. The current translation of the KJV translation of **Hebrews 13:7, 17, and 24** appears to be the attitude of the translators. It is in this vein that Gustavus Paine cogently captures the essence of the “cult of the bishops” mentality, when he writes: “Given the times and the number of bishops among the learned men, the new Bible was certain to sustain the cult of bishops wherever the chance arose.”<sup>[21]</sup>

## **TRADITION AND THE INTERPRETATION**

### **OF HEBREWS 13:17**

From **Hebrews 13:17**, many leaders find authority for their dictatorial powers. But does this verse uphold the kind of tyranny that is found throughout the Churches of Christ as a whole? Why do leaders advance this erroneous view? There is just one answer—tradition. This section of this essay seeks to analyze the phrase—“rule over you” in its biblical setting in order to help godly leaders come to a more balanced and correct view of their positions as shepherds. As stated above, the KJV



renders the Greek word ἡγούμενοι Jhgoumenois (“leading ones”) as “rule over you.” It is significant that the author of Hebrews did not employ the noun ἐξουσία exousia (“authority”), the noun ἀρχὴν arcwn (“ruler”), the verb ἀρχῶ arcw (“rule”), the verb κατακυριεύω katakurieuw (“lord it over”), nor the verb κατεξουσιάζω katexousiazw (“exercise authority over”). These words are conspicuously absent in [Hebrews 13:17](#). The word Jhgoumenois is from the Greek word ἡγεύομαι jJegeomai, which means “to lead” or “to guide.”

### Unswerving Allegiance to Leaders

Countless leaders still demand unswerving allegiance to their dictates; on the other hand, scores of the so-called select few are not stressing obedience to the truth of the Gospel; that is to say, Jesus as God’s way of salvation. But rather, they are trying to force their understanding of doctrinal issues upon unsuspecting members who are not allowed to think for themselves. Christians are compelled to see everything through the distorted lens of interpretation foisted upon the congregation by its leaders. One almost detects a Jim Jones’ type of mentality—absolute control over the lives and minds of God’s people. Christian leaders frequently manipulate, unconsciously, the text to support blind obedience to their dictates in order to uphold their brand of orthodoxy. There is an utter suppression of freedom. The demands are total submission of one’s conscious and surrender of one’s soul. This Lilliputian lunacy flourishes unchecked and is transmitted to the next generation.

There are over twenty-five divisions within the denominational Church of Christ, each claiming to be the “true” church. In each of these various splinter groups, one finds elders or leaders seeking to enforce their brand of orthodoxy upon the members of the local congregation with threat of castigation if they fail “to obey” them that have the “rule over them.” No one denies that one should obey the teachings of the leaders concerning ethical behavior and Jesus as God’s way of salvation. Elders or leaders in each splinter group want to enforce conformity to their odd interpretation of certain Scriptures that they frequently take out of context.

At the moment, numerous leaders advance the notion that it is sinful to employ musical instruments in praise to God, to use multiple cups in the distribution of the Lord’s Supper, to use wine in the Lord’s Supper, to break the bread or to pinch the bread, to participate in Sunday school, to have a kitchen in the church building (even though these same groups have toilets in their buildings), to take money out of the common treasure to purchase goods for those that are not Christians, and so on. Now, which board of directors should one obey? Each distinct fellowship has its own presuppositions, and when an individual ceases to conform to the dictates of the rulers, then this member is castigated under the charge that he/she did not “obey them that have the rule over you.”

Again, the question is: Are Christians to render “blind” obedience to a board of elders—men who can hire or fire preachers without even



consulting the members. Leaders frequently control the finances of the church without any input from its members. It is not uncommon for leaders to exercise an iron fist in its policies. Is this what the author of Hebrews is referring to? Or, is he referring to obedience in reference to clinging to Christ and to holy living? An analysis of the words employed by the author will help to bring one into the consciousness and intention of the writer. As one seeks to understand [Hebrews 13:17](#), one must be conscious that words convey many things to different people as they come to the text.

## VARIOUS NUANCES OF THE GREEK WORDS TRANSLATED

### BY THE KJV AS “OBEY” AND “RULE OVER YOU”

In seeking the intent of the author of the Hebrews writer, one must deliberate upon the function or functions of the Greek words employed by the ultimate author of Holy Scripture, namely the Holy Spirit. Several modern scholars have followed this trend of “authority” as advanced by the King James’ scholars. Even the NIV employs the word *authority* in its translation of this verse: “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority” ([Hebrews 13:17](#)). Translators assume, to some extent, the role of an exegete. Translators are often influenced by other translations when they set forth another translation. A few years ago, this author discussed this presupposition of authority in [Hebrews 13:17](#) with a translator. After looking at the Greek text together, he admitted that he had not looked at the Greek text very closely. He then informed me that his translation of Hebrews stems from other versions.

Leaders seldom ask what this text means; the interpretation of this passage has become normative and is passed on to other Christians as authoritative. It is difficult for believers to hear God accurately because of traditions. A part of the dilemma that the church faces today is an accurate rendering of the Greek text. Before one can draw an accurate reading of this text, one must also consult the Greek text in order to discover the words employed by the author(s) so that one may draw conclusions that are in harmony with the Word of God as a whole. To begin with, the English word *obey* is from the Greek word *πειθω* (*peiqw*, “to persuade,” “to have confidence”). The next English phrase is “rule over you,” but the Greek word is *ηγεωμαι* (*&geomai*, “to lead”). The author of Hebrews actually uses the participle (*ηγουμενοι*, *&hgoumenois*, “leading ones”), which simply means the ones leading you. And the third word is the English word *submit*, which is from the Greek word *υπεικω* (*&upeikw*, “submit”).

The problem of confusion over the role that leaders play within the Christian community lies, to some extent, within the translation of the KJV. But this puzzlement is not limited just to the KJV. In fact, as stated above, other translations also contribute to the misunderstanding. The NIV for instance, translates the Greek word *peiqw* as “obey.” But, on the other hand, the NIV translates the Greek word *&geomai* as “leaders,” instead of “rule over you.” Yet, after translating *&geomai* as leaders, then they add the word “authority.” One can quickly see how the reader can draw unfounded

conclusions based upon the English translations. So the fault is not necessarily the result of the person who reads, even though one should know that something is wrong with the English translations since the common translations violate another Scripture ([Matthew 20:25-28](#)).

One would think that every Christian is eager to obey God. Thus, it seems, at least to this author, that the traditional interpretation is not based on evil motives. But, nevertheless, the end result of this faulty rendering promotes the usurpation of authority over God's people. And, as a result of defective interpretation, one's misguided zeal nullifies the teachings of Jesus against the seizure of power by certain individuals among His people. Even though one may respect Godly men who aspire to leadership, one cannot help but detect difficulties within the current rationalization of one Scripture that cancels out another Scripture. In the investigation of [Hebrews 13:17](#), the study of morphology should shed some light upon the dilemma that individuals face in seeking to be true to the Word of God.

## MORPHOLOGY:

### THE STUDY OF WORD FORMATION

Before one embarks upon the words utilized by the author of [Hebrews 13:17](#), one should undertake a study of the formation of words in order to appreciate more fully the analysis of [Hebrews 13:17](#) that is offered in this study to facilitate the correct application of the words utilized by the author to convey his intended meanings by the particular words he chooses. In order to set the stage for a proper interpretation of [Hebrews 13:17](#), this essay seeks to present a brief analysis of the field of morphology (A study of forms that enter into the structure of words in a language.). This kind of study should lay the scene for a more enlightened appreciation for the various words employed by the author of Hebrews, as well as other authors.

Hopefully, this study of morphology will assist one in his/her search for a clearer comprehension of the import that is attached to any particular word. The primary role that morphology plays in the field of exegesis is helpful for a clearer understanding in one's interpretation. What is morphology? In the field of science, morphology describes the study of the form of living organisms. On the other hand, in the field of linguistics, morphology pertains to the study of word formation. Exegesis begins with morphology. In the study of morphology, one is confronted with the words *morpheme* and *phoneme*.

## Morphemes

What is a morpheme? Neal Windham defines a morpheme this way: "The *morpheme* is to a word what the arm is to a body; it is a part of the word, distinguishable from all others by its unique makeup and function."[\[22\]](#) Windham illustrates his definition with the following: "It is of utmost importance that you go well beyond the level of morphological analysis in studying vocabulary."[\[23\]](#) He then takes the two words *utmost*

and *importance* to demonstrate what morphemes are. In “utmost” you have two morphemes—“ut” and “most.” Then in “importance” you have three morphemes—“im” and “por” and “tance.”

One does not read in morphemes, but morphemes do contribute to the meaning of words. One may have a root morpheme that forms the nucleus of a word, while, at the same time, morphemes may be added to the root. For instance, morphemes may be added to the root word “obey” and may be called prefixes or suffixes. That is to say, the prefixes or suffixes may be called affixes. For example, in the word obey, one can add an “s,” or “ed,” or “ing” to the word *obey*—obeys, obeyed, or obeying. The affixes are “s,” “ed,” and “ing.” These affixes are called suffixes. On the other hand, affixes placed before the root are prefixes; for example, “re” in require, and “un” in unsaved. And finally, affixes appearing in the middle of words are called infixes.

For a combination of prefixes and suffixes added to a root, look up the word *antidisestablishmentarianism* (*anti dis establishment arian ism*), which means

The theory (ism) of those who (arian) oppose (anti) the breakdown (dis) of the organization of church and state (establishment). There are three prefixes (anti-, dis, and e [from ek]) and six suffixes (bl [from able], ish, ment, ari, an, and ism) built upon the root sta [from the Greek I]στημι (&isthmi, “I stand”).[\[24\]](#)

Black also gives one of the most informative statements concerning the distinction between root and stem that one can read. He goes right to the very core of the difference when he writes:

A root must be carefully distinguished from a stem. A stem is any construction to which an affix can be added. Whereas roots always contain a single morpheme, a stem may consist of a root plus an affix. For example, dress is a single morpheme. In the verb undress, dress is the root to which un—is prefixed. It is also the stem. In undressing, dress is still the root or base, but undress is the stem with the suffix—ing. Thus, all roots are stems, but not all stems are roots. In the word blackbirds, black and bird are roots, while blackbird is the stem to which the suffix—s is attached. Stems that consist of two roots are called compounds.[\[25\]](#)

### **The Morphological System:**

#### **Structure of the Greek Language**

To understand the structure of the Greek language, one must visualize the morphological system by which its words are constructed. Since words may be made up of several morphemes, one must have a procedure for identifying these minimal parts. Some morphemes are referred to as free morphemes because they can form words without being attached to any

other form. For instance, the word *dog* is a free morpheme. This word can form a morpheme without being associated to any other morpheme. In the plural (dogs), you have two morphemes: “dog” and “s.” Thus, the “s” is a bound morpheme. Bound morphemes do not necessarily define meaning.

To illustrate this statement, consider the word *hit*. “Hit” is a free morpheme; but “hits” contains a bound morpheme (“s”). But what does “hits” mean? Context is the deciding factor. For example, take the sentence, “The car *hits* the mail box,” or the sentence, “The singer had many *hits*. In the first sentence, the phoneme (“the minimal unit of speech sound in a given language that distinguishes one utterance from another”<sup>[26]</sup>) “s” signifies the third person singular, whereas in the second sentence, the phoneme “s” signifies the plural.<sup>[27]</sup> In like manner, “the ‘er’ in *hitter* and *greater* forms two different morphemes meaning ‘one who’ and ‘comparative form of the adjective,’ respectively,” writes Black.<sup>[28]</sup>

### Phonemes

As observed above, in addition to morphemes, there are also phonemes in words. Remember that a phoneme is the minimal unit of speech sounds in a language that distinguishes one utterance from another. Windham illustrates this distinction with the words *pie* and *lie*. For instance, the “p” in “pie” and the “l” in “lie,” distinguish these two words.<sup>[29]</sup> Each phoneme is essential to a correct identification of the vocalization. Phonemes help to convey a specific meaning or concept in a language. Generally speaking, morphemes are longer than phonemes. Morphemes may also help to furnish lexical meaning as well as point toward grammatical distinctions.

### GRAMMATICAL ELEMENTS IN THE GREEK VERB ΛΥΨΩ LUW

To illustrate the grammatical elements in the Greek, the verb λυψω (luw, “I loose”) is used to draw attention to the importance of identification of morphemes. The morpheme ω (w) appears in the present active indicative of λυψω (luw, “I loose”).<sup>[30]</sup> The ω informs one that the verb has as its subject an individual person who is loosing. The following chart is listed in order to illustrate how the grammatical morpheme helps the reader to determine whether the first, second, or third person is under consideration and also to determine whether the verb is singular or plural:

**Chart: The Verb Λυψω Luw, “I Loose”**

λυψω	luw	“I loose”	λυψομεν	luomen	“we loose”
λυψεῖ	lueis	“you loose”	λυψετε	luete	“you loose”
λυψει	luei	“he looses”	λυψουσι	luousi	“they loose”

In “I loose,” the grammatical morpheme ω (w) identifies this verb as a present active indicative, first person singular.

To illustrate the lexical elements in the Greek noun, the noun  $\eta\sigma\gamma\epsilon\psi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  (&geomai)[31] is chosen since this is a form of the word employed in **Hebrews 13:17**. This Greek word describes “the ones leading you.” By analyzing the lexical morphemes in the word &geomai, this will enable the reader to understand more clearly the import of the word.  $\alpha\eta\gamma\epsilon\psi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  (&geomai) is built on the root  $\text{ΑΓ}$  (ag, “drive,” “lead,” “weigh”), which generally has to do with “leading.”[32] Harold Greenlee’s comments are helpful in this particular area:

For words whose derivation is not obvious, the derivation is given in parentheses—e.g.,  $\eta\sigma\gamma\epsilon\psi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  ( $\alpha[\gamma\omega, \text{agw}]$ ). In some instances in which doubt remained, I have consulted other works including the unabridged editions of LS [Liddell—Scott].[33]

The word  $\eta\sigma\gamma\epsilon\psi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  is irregular, but, nevertheless, the root is AG (ag). The “a” in “ag” changed to long “h” ( $\eta$ ). To assist the reader in recognizing the root in various words, the following list is reduplicated from Metzger’s book on *Lexical Aids*:

### Chart: The Root $\text{ΑΓ}$ AG:

#### Words Formed from This Root

GREEK	TRANSLITERATION	DEFINITION
$\alpha[\gamma\omega$	agw	I lead
$\alpha\varsigma\nu\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	anagw	I lead up; middle, I put to sea, set sail
$\alpha\varsigma\pi\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	apagw	I lead away
$\epsilon\iota\sigma\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	eisagw	I lead in, I bring in
$\epsilon\varsigma\chi\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	exagw	I lead out
$\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	paragw	I pass by
$\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	periagw	I lead about, I go about
$\pi\rho\omicron\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	proagw	I lead forth, go about
$\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	sunagw	I gather together
$\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\eta\psi$	sunagwgh	a synagogue
$\alpha\varsigma\rho\chi\iota\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\psi\gamma\omega\gamma\omicron$	arcisunagwgos	a ruler of the synagogue
$\epsilon\varsigma\pi\iota\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	episunagw	I collect, gather together at one place
$\upsilon\sigma\pi\alpha\psi\gamma\omega$	&upagw	I depart
$\alpha\varsigma\gamma\rho\psi$	agros	place where cattle are led or driven, a field
$\eta\sigma\gamma\epsilon\psi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$	&hgeomai	I am chief; I think, regard; I lead through the mind
$\eta\sigma\gamma\epsilon\mu\omega\nu$	&hgemwn	a leader, governor
$\alpha[\xi\iota\omicron$	axios	(of equal weight), worthy
$\alpha\varsigma\xi\iota\omicron\psi\omega$	axiow	I deem worthy, think fit

αξιψῶ	axiws	worthily
αγῶν	agwn	an athletic contest, a contest <a href="#">[34]</a>

As noted above, Metzger gives the following definitions associated with the root “ag”: “drive, lead, weight.” One may wonder why he assigns these definitions with the root “ag.” The following chart helps one to focus in on the various shades of meaning to be attached to words with this root:

ROOT	MEANING	EXAMPLE	DEFINITION
αγ	Lead	αγῶ (agw)	I lead
	Drive	εξῆαγῶ (exagw)	I lead out
	Weight	ἐπισυναγῶ (episunagw)	I gather together at one place <a href="#">[35]</a>

Another word that plays a major role in the interpretation of [Hebrews 13:17](#) is the Greek word πειψθῶ (peiqw). An understanding of the morpheme of peiqw should assist one in properly understanding the significance of this word as employed by the writer of Hebrews. The root πιθ (piq, “bind”) appears in a large number of Greek words. In some formations, the πιθ inserts an ε (e) before the ι (i) to form a diphthong ( a combination of two vowels in a single syllable). The diphthong ει (ei) is pronounced as a long “a”; with the combination of π (p), the syllable πει (pei) is pronounced as “pay.” The following chart illustrates a sample of the πιθ (piq) words:

### Chart: The Root Πιθ Piq:

#### Words Formed from This Root

GREEK	TRANSLITERATION	DEFINITION
πειψθῶ	peiqw	I persuade (bind myself)
ἀπειθεῖω	apeiqew	I disbelieve, disobey (not let myself be bound)
ἀπειθεῖα	apeiqeia	disobedience, rebellion
ἀπειθεῖς	apeiqhs	disobedient
πεποιθῆσθαι	pepoihsis	trust, confidence
πιστῖ	pistis	faithful, believing
ἀπιστῶ	apistos	unbelieving, faithless
ἀπιστία	apistia	unbelief
ὀλιγοπιστῶ	oligopistos	of little faith
πιστεύω	pisteuw	I have faith (in) believe
ἀπιστεύω	apisteuw	I am unfaithful, disbelieve <a href="#">[36]</a>

Hopefully, the foregoing charts serve to illustrate the complexity in determining the meaning of a particular word. When one understands the basic meaning of the root word, this does give assistance in understanding the various words built upon the root. Another example should also clarify how the root sheds light upon the various applications. The root morpheme in the Greek word λυψω (luw) is λυ (lu), which means, “to loose.” Consider the following chart:

#### Chart: The Root Λυ Lu:

##### Words Formed from this Root

ROOT	MEANING	EXAMPLE	DEFINITION
λυ (lu)	loose	λυψω (luo)	I loose
		αζσπολυψω (apoluw)	I release, loose from
		αζσπολυψτρωσί (apolutrwsis)	Redemption, releasing
		καταλυψω (kataluw)	I lodge (after loosing my clothing)
		παραλυψομαι (paraluomai)	I am a paralytic (I am unstrung)
		παραλυτικοῦ (paralutikos)	paralytic <sup>[37]</sup>

One can detect—just from a cursory glance at the root of λυψω—from the above chart the various combinations that results in the various uses of the Greek root λυ. A similar observation of the Greek verb for rule (αρχω, arcw). The root of this Greek word is αρχ (arc), which means, “be first.” There is also the noun form αρχηψ (arch), which means, “a beginning.” The following chart lists several words built upon the root (αρχ):

#### Chart: The Root Αρχ Arc:

##### Words Formed from This Root

ROOT	MEANING	EXAMPLE	DEFINITION
αρχ (arc)	“be first”	αρχω (arcw)	(first in point of station), I rule; middle, (first in point of time), I begin
		αρχων (arcwn)	a ruler
		αρχηψ (arce)	a beginning
		αρχαι'ο (arcaios)	old, ancient



		αρχιερεὺς (arceireus)	A chief priest, high priest
		ὑπὸ ἑταρῶν (&uparcw)	(I am under as a foundation, support), I am, I exist, I belong to
		ἀρχὴν (aparch)	first fruits[38]

The root meaning of a word can assist one in understanding the underlying meaning attached to a particular word. This understanding of morphology assists one as he/she endeavors to ascertain the meaning of a word in a given context. As one embarks upon an interpretation of **Hebrews 13:17**, this comprehension of how to analyze words with the same basic root meaning helps one in the determination of the meaning to be attached to any particular word.

### THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF ΠΕΙΨΘΩ PEIQW

Obey (Πειψθεσθε, Peiqesqe) them that have the rule over you (ἡγουμενοὶ, &hgoumenois), and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you (**Hebrews 13:17**, KJV).

The question that confronts everyone is, what definition should one attach to the Greek word that is translated as “obey” in **Hebrews 13:17**? Is there justification for translating πειψθω (peiqw) as “obey”? Yes! But it all depends on what you mean by “obey.” The author of this Epistle is not suggesting that Christians “unscrew” their heads and let certain ones in the congregation do their thinking for them. Thus, if one has this kind (“lord it over”) of an attitude about “obey,” then this is not correct. If, on the other hand, one interprets the Greek word as “obey” in reference to what he said earlier in this same chapter (**vv. 1-7**), then “obey” would be a legitimate translation.

The kind of domination that many elders, preachers, and editors of religious journals advance is the opposite of what Paul writes, as cited above, to the Corinthians: “Not that we lord it over (κυριευομεν kurieuomen) your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm” (**2 Corinthians 1:24**). Alfred Marshall in his transliteration of the Greek text translates the Greek word κυριευομεν (kurieuomen) as “we rule over.”[39] But Paul negates this “we rule over” with “not”—“not that we rule over.” Yet, today, elders, who are not inspired, claim rule over God’s children. It is in this identical vein that Peter cautions elders about exercising “rule” over God’s people. Listen, once more, to Peter as he issues his warning:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care,

serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup> not lording it over (κατακυριευοντῆ katakuriēuontes) those entrusted to you, but being examples (τυποὶ tupoi) to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. <sup>5</sup> Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (**1 Peter 5:1-5**).

Christians were to imitate their shepherds' (leaders) daily walk with God. This kind of submission is the same exhortation to the Hebrews: “imitate their faith” (**13:7**). As one seeks to eliminate so much tradition that covers the Word of God, it is necessary to repeat over and over again the Scriptures that deny the traditional view concerning the proper sphere of leadership. Peter’s words ought to be considered in one’s interpretation of the Hebrews passages. One cannot set in opposition one Scripture against another as Satan did in his encounter with Jesus (see **Matthew 4:1-11**). The thrust of **Hebrews 13:7**, for instance, deals with imitating the life of godly men (leaders) who were examples of holiness in daily living: “Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” These “leading ones” pursued righteousness, love, peace, and faith.

These godly men had put their Christianity into practice. They possessed the mind of Christ (see **Philippians 2:1-8**). These leaders were individuals who maintained the characteristics that Paul enumerates in his short epistle to Titus:

<sup>5</sup> The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. <sup>6</sup> An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>8</sup> Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. <sup>9</sup> He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. <sup>10</sup> For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. <sup>11</sup> They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. <sup>12</sup> Even one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” <sup>13</sup> This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will

be sound in the faith<sup>14</sup>and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.<sup>15</sup> To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.<sup>16</sup> They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good (**Titus 1:5-16**).

No child of God will rebel against the kind of leadership that Paul draws attention to. On the contrary, one will subject himself/herself readily and courteously to the behavior set forth by elders. For Paul, an elder had to hold firmly to the message of salvation, that is to say, Jesus as God's way of salvation—not Jesus plus circumcision. Those who advance another way of salvation other than “faith” in Jesus as God's way of salvation should be considered anathema, whether by elders, preachers, editors of religious journals, or angels (see **Galatians 1:6-9**).<sup>[40]</sup>

Why did Peter write what he did in **1 Peter 5:1-5**? Why did Paul write to the Corinthians what he did in **2 Corinthians 1:24**? Both of these Scriptures must be taken into consideration as one seeks a proper understanding of **Hebrews 13:17**. If one considers the participles in the Hebrews' passages, then one can arrive at an interpretation that is in harmony with the whole of God's Word. It is significant that the participles employed by the author of Hebrews speak of leaders, not rulers. God's leaders are to serve, not to have power over. Leaders do not have the “right of sovereignty” over one's faith. If God had given leaders such sovereignty, then those under the selected few could not be held accountable in the event of false doctrine embraced by the leaders.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says: “Not that we lord it over (κυριευομεν kurieuomen<sup>[41]</sup>) your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm” (**2 Corinthians 1:24**). Paul specifically says, “not that we lord it over your faith.” This particular Greek word that Paul employs in **2 Corinthians 1: 24** is clearly missing in **Hebrews 13: 7, 17, and 24**. The so-called rulers today cite **Hebrews 13:17** to give clout to their abuse of this passage. What is significant about the participle is that this verse does not use the Greek word for elder (πρεσβυτερο presbuteras, “an old man, an elder”—used of age), but the word for leading (ηγεσθαι Jhgeomai). This text does not identify the ones leading. The Greek participle is more comprehensive and more sweeping than is the word *elder*.

Is not the answer to these two questions (proposed above) to be found in Jesus' rebuke of the apostles when they were arguing about who is the greatest? Listen to Jesus as he cautions the disciples about their striving for positions of power:

<sup>25</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “**You know that the rulers** (αρχοντες arcontes) **of the Gentiles lord it over**

(κατακυριευουσιν katakurieuousin[42]) them, and their high officials exercise authority (κατεξουσιαζουσιν katexousiazousin[43]) over them. <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

The religious leaders (elders, preachers, and bishop editors) still demand absolute control over the faith of its members. They think they are “rulers,” even though God has never made them rulers. One can learn once more from Matthew’s account of Jesus’ warning against the religious leaders of His day:

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: <sup>2</sup> “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. <sup>3</sup> So you must obey (ποιησατε poihsate, “do you”) them and do (τηρειτε threite, “keep”) everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. <sup>4</sup> They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. <sup>5</sup> “Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; <sup>6</sup> they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; <sup>7</sup> they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’ <sup>8</sup> “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup> And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. <sup>11</sup> The greatest among you will be your servant. <sup>12</sup> For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (Matthew 23:1-12).

Jesus’ rebuke of the religious leaders for their hypocrisy—say and do not--and the admonition to the crowd to do what they say is an excellent commentary on Hebrews 13:17. The author of Hebrews calls attention to leaders who not only said, but were also leaders who practiced what they preached. The Hebrews’ author writes: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (13:7). In addition to his castigation of the religious leaders for their lack of faithfulness to God in their daily lives, He also rebukes them for their elevated opinion of themselves. The traditional interpretation of Hebrews 13:17 does not fit in with the teachings of Jesus, Paul, nor Peter. In other words, the believers were to imitate their leaders, not just in the sense of doctrine—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—but they were also to put their faith into practice in their daily lives.

## Πειψθω (peiqw) and the Imperative Mood

The author of Hebrews employs the imperative mood in **13:17**. But the imperative mood is not just associated with commands; it is also employed in the sense of encouragement, that is to say, to encourage or ask someone to do something.<sup>[44]</sup> The context is the deciding factor. But the word may also be translated “persuade” or “win over.” The word *persuade* does not carry the same nuance that the word *obey* conjures up in the mind. Many leaders have taken a perfectly good word and turned it into something that has almost a threatening tone. For this reason, this paper will extensively cite Scriptures in which the word *peiqw* occurs—or at least some form of this word. The background of the passage must be consulted to determine which word is the most appropriate for the situation in the twenty-first century. There are numerous Scriptures within which the word *πειψθω* (*peiqw*) occurs. One discovers that sometimes one translation fits the context better than another translation. The form that appears in the Greek text is *Πειψθεσθε* (*Peiqesqe*), which means, “be persuaded” or “to have confidence.” The identification of this verb is a second person, plural, present, passive, imperative.

Even though the word is imperative, and may be translated “obey,” nevertheless, the context seems to require the translation of “be persuaded,” which is not quite as harsh as the current use of the word *obey*. To illustrate the passive imperative, Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians is quite helpful in this matter of interpretation. Paul writes: “Do not get drunk (*μηΨ μεθυψσκεσθε*, *mh mequskesqe*) on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled (*πληρου'σθε*, *plhrousqe*) with the Spirit” (**Ephesians 5:18**). The first phrase “Do not get drunk” and the second phrase “be filled” are present, passive, and imperative forms. The Greek construction of both verbs in **Ephesians 5:18** are identical in form to **Hebrews 13:17**. The focus of **Hebrews 13:17** is that of “be persuaded.” Obedience is the underlying tone of the phrase “be persuaded.”

The English word *obey* is too strong a translation for *πειψθω* (*peiqw*), at least in this context. Even though obedience is inherent in this word, nevertheless, “persuasion” is the nuance to be attached to *peiqw*, rather than the word *obey*. The objective of “persuasion,” as employed by the author of Hebrews, is to seek allegiance or submission on the part of the hearers. An excellent example of this meaning is also found in Luke’s narrative of Paul’s defense before king Agrippa. When Paul seeks to persuade Agrippa to respond to the Gospel, he is seeking obedience to the Good News of God’s Way of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. Listen to Paul as he addresses Agrippa:

The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced (*πειψθομαι*, *peiqomai*<sup>[45]</sup>) that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.<sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”<sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time

you can persuade (πειψθεῖ, peiqeis[46]) me to be a Christian?”<sup>29</sup> Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains” ([Acts 26:26-29](#)).

The New American Standard Bible translates the word peiqomai as “persuaded” rather than “convinced”: “For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner” ([26:26](#)).<sup>[47]</sup> Then in verse twenty-eight, the verb is translated as “persuade” (NASB). The Contemporary English Version translates the Greek word peiqeis as “talk me”: “Agrippa asked Paul, “In such a short time do you think you can talk me into being a Christian?”<sup>[48]</sup> The concept that lies behind the word peiqw is the idea of convincing or talking to someone in order to bring about a desired behavior. The idea is not that of a single individual or a group of men operating as a board of directors to issue ultimatums to be carried out by lay-people.

Even if one should translate πειψθω (peiqw) as “obey,” the question that must be answered is, what were they to obey? Does this obedience require blind obedience to a select group of men who act as infallible interpreters of the Word of God? Can other individuals (leaders) demand conformity to their way of thinking?<sup>[49]</sup> For example, one’s views on Sunday school, individual communion cups, church treasury, grape juice in the Lord’s Supper, breaking bread, pinching bread, and so on, are interpreted differently in various fellowships. Is there a certain group of elders that everyone must submit to? What is happening within the various factions of the Churches of Christ today is the same thing that John, an Apostle of Jesus, encountered with Diotrephes:

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us.<sup>10</sup> So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church ([3 John 9-10](#)).

The “Diotrephian Spirit” is still alive and well on planet earth. Are men and women not responsible for studying the Scriptures for themselves? Many well-meaning leaders adopt a “Diotrephian” spirit toward other believers. This same spirit is still prevalent among sincere Christian leaders. Many leaders refuse fellowship with other believers if their views do not coincide with their own presuppositions. Many Christian leaders will not accept another Christian if his/her interpretation does not harmonize with their interpretation on divorce and remarriage, the use of one container in the Lord’s Supper for the distribution of the fruit of the vine, the manner of breaking or pinching of the bread in the Lord’s Supper, the employment of Sunday school, and so on.

Are Christians to surrender all interpretation of God’s Word to a select few—three or four men? Do certain men speak *ex cathedra*?<sup>[50]</sup>



Again, as one reflects upon the context of **Hebrews 13:17**, one discovers that the area of controversy centers around the English word *obey*; this translation is responsible for all kinds of havoc within the Churches of Christ. Just what is the author of Hebrews seeking to convey when he admonishes the believers to submit (obey) to their leaders? If one would begin with verse one of this chapter, one would quickly see that this obedience involves holiness as one's way of life. For instance, one should read carefully and thoughtfully the following advice:

Keep on loving each other as brothers. <sup>2</sup> Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. <sup>3</sup> Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. <sup>4</sup> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. <sup>5</sup> Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (**Hebrews 13:1-5**).

The obedience required in **Hebrews 13:17** had to do with loving one another, entertaining strangers, ministering to those in prison, faithfulness to the marriage covenant, eliminating covetousness, and learning contentment. Is it any wonder that the author of Hebrews encourages the believers to "be persuaded" by their leaders to right ethical behavior? This obedience had nothing to do with blind conformity to fallible interpreters who insisted that everyone must comply with their brand of orthodoxy. This philosophy of "obey them that have the rule over you" contradicts **1 Corinthians 8** and **Romans 14 and 15**. **Hebrews 13:7** also adds credence to the above scenario of certain things to be added to their daily walk with God. Did the leaders walk this way? The author says;

"Remember your leaders (ἡγεγουμενων, &hgomenwn, "the ones leading you"), who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (**13:7**).

The Christians were to "consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." This is the obedience that the Hebrews author is pleading. It is significant that even the word &hgoumenwn is translated as "rule" in the King James Version. The NIV translates this word as "leaders." Again, as one seeks to comprehend the word that Paul employs (peiqw), one's attention upon this particular word should be of help. Listen to W. E. Vine as he draws attention to this neglected aspect of correct interpretation:

2. PEITHOM (πειθω, (3982)), to persuade, to win over, in the Passive and Middle Voices, to be persuaded, to listen to, to obey, is so used with this meaning, in the Middle Voice, e.g.,



in Acts 5:36, 37 (in ver. 40, Passive Voice, “they agreed”); Rom. 2:8; Gal. 5:7; Heb. 13:17; Jas. 3:3. The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion. [\[51\]](#)

Vine correctly states the force of the word when he says, “The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion.” Words frequently convey many different meanings. One must be careful that he/she does not import motives to the writer that he never had. If one allows his/her presuppositions to interfere with what the author actually said, one may miss the originally intended relationship projected by the word employed. The word *πειψθω* (*peiqw*) occurs approximately fifty-five times in the New Testament. This word is translated as “persuaded,” “trusted,” “obeyed,” “agreed,” “made,” “confidence,” and so on. The context is the determinative factor in seeking a proper translation of this word in order to convey accurately the intent of the author. The following Scripture citations illustrate how scholars translate the word *πειψθω* (*peiqw*) in other contexts:

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded (*επεισαν*, *epeisan* [\[52\]](#)) the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed (**Matthew 27:20**).

Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied (*εσπειψοντο*, *epeiqonto* [\[53\]](#)) to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing (**Acts 5:36**).

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively (*πειψθων*, *peiqwn* [\[54\]](#)) about the kingdom of God (**Acts 19:8**).

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade (*πειψθει*, *peiqeis* [\[55\]](#)) me to be a Christian?” (**Acts 26:28**).

They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince (*πειψθων*, *peiqwn* [\[56\]](#)) them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets (**Acts 28:23**).

You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying (*πειψθεσθαι*, *peiqesqai* [\[57\]](#)) the truth? (**Galatians 5:7**)

Even though the word *obey* is an accurate translation of the Greek word *πειψθω* (*peiqw*), nevertheless, the English word *obey* is too strong and does not carry the nuance that is to be attached to the basic meaning of the

Greek. One cannot deny that “obedience” is associated with the word peiqw. **Hebrews 13:17** does teach obedience, but the question is, Obedience to what? The conformity (obedience) is to the pattern of teaching concerning ethical behavior, not the blind whims of a few select individuals who have set themselves up as infallible interpreters. Bultmann makes the following succinct observation that peiqw does sometimes carry the connotation, or implication, of “obedience.” He writes:

The use of πειψθεσθαι (peiqesqai) is of no great theological significance in any of these passages apart from R. 2:8; Gl. 5:7. Underlying the antithesis of R. 2:8 is the thought that the true relation to God is that of obedience. . . . In Gl. 5:7 the πειψθεσθαι αςληθειψα (peiqesqai alhqeia) is materially though not verbally identical with the υΣπακουψειν τω' ευζαγγελιψω (&uakouein tw euaggeliw) of R. 10.16.[\[58\]](#)

Bultmann parallels the following Scriptures to illustrate that one who rejects, or disobeys (**Romans 2:8**), the truth is on par with one not obeying (**Romans 10:17**) the truth, even though two different Greek words are employed in the two passages.

ROMANS 2:8	GALATIANS 5:7-8	ROMANS 10:16
But for those who are self-seeking and who <u>reject</u> the truth (αςπειθου'σι τη' αςληθειψα, apeiqousi th alhqeia ) and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.	You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth (τη') αςληθειψα μηΨ πειψθεσθαιΨ, th alhqeia mh peiqesqai)?	But not all the Israelites <u>accepted</u> the good news (υΣπηψκουσαν τω' ευζαγγελιψω, &uphkousan tw euaggeliw). For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?”

In **Romans 2:8**, Paul uses the negative of peiqw (“reject,” or “not to be persuaded”), but the same word in Galatians—without the alpha privitive—is translated “persuasion.” On the other hand, Bultmann maintains that one who is not persuaded, or one who obeys not the truth in **Galatians 5:7** is tantamount to the ones not obeying the Gospel in **Romans 10:16**, even though two different words are employed—in **Galatians 5:7** (πειψθω, “to persuade,” “to have confidence”) and in **Romans 10:17** (υΣπακουψω, “to listen,” “to attend”). Yet these two words are, in some sense, synonyms, nevertheless, πειψθω (peiqw) carries the nuance of persuasion.

The Greek word employed by Paul in **Romans 10:17** is also used by him in Ephesians concerning children obeying their parents. He writes: “Children, obey (υΣπακουψετε, &upakouete[\[59\]](#)) your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (**Ephesians 6:1**). Πειψθω may carry the idea of obedience

in some contexts. The Greek word ὑπακούω *j&upakouw* (“obey”) seems to carry a different nuance than the Greek word πείνω (*peiqw*) (“persuade”). Words conjure up a number of associations in one’s minds. Since words convey a special flavor, it is important that an interpreter operate in the same context as the author. The easiest way to learn the principal terms is to study examples that illustrate the various nuances assigned to each word in context. In order to accomplish this task, the following examples will search words as employed in the Classical Greek usage, the Septuagint, and the New Testament in order to uncover the various meanings behind πείνω.

### Examples of the Imperative Mood

As stated above, the verb πείνω (*peiqw*) in **Hebrews 13:17** is a present passive imperative. Since this word is an imperative form, the translations, as a whole, tend toward translating this as a command. But, the imperative mood is also used to encourage or ask someone to do something. The original significance of the imperative is command or exhortation, but it is not confined to this idea.<sup>[60]</sup> For example, the imperative mood is also utilized for entreaty: “**Holy Father, protect** (τηρησον, *thrison*,<sup>[61]</sup> “to watch over,” “to guard”) **them by the power of your name**” (**John 17:11**). Even though Jesus utilizes the imperative in His prayer to the Father, one would not translate this as Jesus commanding the Father to do something, but rather of Jesus' entreaty to the Father. The basic concept of the present passive imperative in **Hebrews 13:17** appears to be that of exhortation—keep on being persuaded by the ones leading you to live holy lives.

One does not command God to do something, but rather he/she entreats God. Another example of imperative used in the sense of entreaty is found in the so-called Lord's Prayer in Matthew. Matthew writes: “**Give** (δοΨ, *dos*,<sup>[62]</sup> “to give” [in various senses literally or figuratively]) **us today our daily bread**” (**Matthew 6:11**). One cannot command God, even though the imperative is used in the prayer, but rather one entreats God to give him/her daily bread. The imperative is built on the present tense stem and indicates a continuous action. The aorist, on the other hand, speaks of undefined action. To assist one in identification of the imperative mood, the following chart is given to aid one in classification:

**Chart: Imperative Translation of Λύω *Luw***

	PRESENT	FIRST AORIST	TRANSLATION
	<b>ACTIVE</b>		
2sg	λύε ( <i>lue</i> )	λύσον ( <i>luson</i> )	(You) loose!
3sg	λυέτω ( <i>luetw</i> )	λύσάτω ( <i>lusatw</i> )	Let him loose!
2pl	λύετε ( <i>lue</i> )	λύσατε ( <i>lusate</i> )	(You) loose!
3pl	λυέτωσαν ( <i>luetwsan</i> )	λύσάτωσαν ( <i>lusatwsan</i> )	Let them loose!
	<b>MIDDLE</b>		
2sg	λύου ( <i>luou</i> )	λύσαι ( <i>lusai</i> )	(You) loose for yourself!
3sg	λυέσθω	λύσασθω	Let him loose for

	(luesqw)	(lusasqw)	himself!
2pl	λυψεσθε (luesqe)	λυψασθε (lusasqe)	(You) loose!
3pl	λυψθωσαν (luesqwsan)	λυσαψθωσαν (lusasqwsan)	Let them loose!
<b>PASSIVE</b>			
2sg	λυψου (luou)	λυ'σαι (lusai)	(You) be loosed!
3sg	λυψεσθω (luesqw)	λυσαψσθω (lusasqw)	Let him be loosed!
2pl	λυψεσθε (luesqe)	λυψασθε (lusasqe)	(You) be loosed!
3pl	λυψθωσαν (luesqwsan)	λυσαψθωσαν (lusasqwsan)	Let them be loosed!

To help the reader arrive at a clearer perception of the present passive in [Hebrews 13:17](#), the following discussion seeks to explore the Classical Period, the Hellenistic (Septuagint) Period, and the Koine Greek Period. The purpose of this study is to aid one in finding the English words which most correctly expresses the original Greek words in [Hebrews 13:17](#). Also, in this study, one must consider synonyms in order to arrive at a more accurate rendering of the verse. Synonyms help to ascertain the full meaning of a context. One must also be conscious of one word over another. If the Holy Spirit guides one writer to choose one word over another in a given context, then it may be important to understand why He did so.

### Classical Greek Usage of Πειψθω Peiqw

In Classical Greek [\[63\]](#) πειψθω (peiqw) is a many-sided term. It has two basic meanings. In the active voice, it means to persuade or convince. On the other hand, the passive voice conveys the idea of “to be persuaded,” which is the second basic understanding. The nuances of the passive voice include the following definitions: “to trust, to rely upon, to have confidence in.” [\[64\]](#) Liddell-Scott translates the active voice as “prevail upon, persuade, usu. by fair means,” and they translate the passive voice as “to be prevailed on, won over, persuaded.” [\[65\]](#) Persuasion is the basic concept of the passive, and this perception of the passive played a major role in Greek thinking.

### Hellenistic (LXX) Greek usage of Πειψθω Peiqw

The translators of the Septuagint (LXX) used peiqw to translate ten different Hebrew words. However, any Greek thought of “persuading” is foreign to Semitic thought. [\[66\]](#) The Hebrew word  $jf^{\wedge}B^*$  ( $B^*f^{\wedge}j$ ) is consistently translated in the LXX by the Greek word peiqw. The idea of the Hebrew word is “to trust, put confidence in, inspire trust.” For example, consider the following Scriptures from the Hebrew and Septuagint:

<sup>19</sup> The field commander said to them, “Tell Hezekiah:

”“This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence ( $B^*f^{\wedge}j$  or peiqw) of yours ([2 Kings](#)

18:19)?

Will you rely (B\*f^j or peiqw) on him for his great strength? Will you leave your heavy work to him (**Job 39:11**)?

Whoever trusts (B\*f^j or peiqw) in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf (**Proverbs 11:28**).

Unlike the Classical Greek Age, the LXX translators did not employ peiqw with the idea of “persuasion,” but rather with “trust” (nuance of the passive). Peiqw is selected by the LXX to describe putting confidence in God or to depict allegiance to something other than God. One was to “trust” or to “put one’s “confidence in” God. For instance, consider the following Scriptures:

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way,  
for his wrath can flare up in a moment Blessed are all who take  
refuge (peiqw) in him (**Psalm 2:12**).

Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who  
trusts (peiqw) in the LORD (**Proverbs 16:20**).

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah develop this theme of trust with the use of peiqw. In other words, the Israelites must put their trust in God, the Holy One of Israel. In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek word peiqw is a term employed to describe Israel’s covenant relationship, or lack of it, to God. Peiqw in the Septuagint closely approximates πιστευω (pisteuw, “to trust, to believe in, to have faith in”).

### Hellenistic Usage (The New Testament) of Πειθω Peiqw

The New Testament usage resembles the Classical Greek usage in that it bears actively the sense of “to persuade, to convince,” or passively “to be convinced.” Peiqw appears in the Synoptic Gospels but not in John. Luke uses this word twenty-one times, more than any other writer in the New Testament. To illustrate the Attic (Hellenistic—active) usage of “persuasion” in the New Testament, one’s attention should focus upon an episode that took place between Jesus and the religious leaders. For example, Luke records a conversation that took place between Jesus and the chief priest and the teachers of the Law. In this dialogue, Luke writes that the teachers of the Law and the priest reasoned: “But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded (πεπεισμενῶ, pepeismenos[67]) that John was a prophet” (**Luke 20:6**).

Also, the writer of Hebrews uses a form of this same word when he writes: “Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident (Πεπεισμεθα, pepeismeqa[68]) of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation” (**Hebrews 6:9**). The KJV translates this Greek word as “we are persuaded.” Both of these passages (**Luke 20:6** and **Hebrews 6:9**) illustrate the Classical Greek usage rather than the Hellenistic biblical usage (LXX). The Book of Acts presents an almost rhetorical understanding of peiqw that parallels the Classical Greek perception of the expression. The speeches in Acts reveal the value that was placed upon the ability to

persuade. The following citations from Luke demonstrates this usage of the word *peiqw* in the various contexts:

Some of the Jews were persuaded (*εξπειψοθησαν*, *epeisqhsan* [69]) and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women (**Acts 17:4**).

And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced (*πειψοῶ*, *peisas* [70]) and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all (**Acts 19:26**).

They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince (*πειψθων*, *peiqwn* [71]) them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets (**Acts 28:23**).

Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade (*επειθεν*, *epiqen* [72]) Jews and Greeks (**Acts 18:4**).

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively (*πειψθων*, *peiqwn* [73]) about the kingdom of God (**Acts 19:8**).

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade (*πειψθει*, *peiqeis* [74]) me to be a Christian?” (**Acts 26:28**).

Paul’s writings also reflect both the Hellenistic and the Classical Greek concept. The Hellenistic idea centers on the idea of “trust,” but the Classical Greek idea involves the meaning of persuasion as well as trust. In the writings of Paul, one discovers that he employs the Greek word *peiqw*, as employed in the LXX (Septuagint), as “trust.” For instance, in his letter to Rome, he writes: “But for those who are self-seeking and who reject (*απειθουσιν*, *apeiqousi*, “to disobey” [75]) the truth and follow (*πειθομενοι*, [76]) evil, there will be wrath and anger” (**Romans 2:8**). In other words, those placing confidence in themselves and following evil will incur God’s wrath. The one who refuses to obey or trust God follows evil.

Another example of Paul’s usage of *peiqw* (LXX usage) in the sense of “trust” is in his letter to the Corinthians: “Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely (*πεποιθοῦτε* *pepoiotes*, “having trusted” [77]) on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead” (**2 Corinthians 1:9**). Also, Paul, in writing to the Philippians, uses this same Greek word in the sense of “trust”: “For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence (*πεποιθοῦτε* *pepoiotes*, “trusting”) in the flesh—<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence (*πεποιθεναι* [78] *pepoiennai*, “to trust”)” (**Philippians 3:3-4**). As one



reflects upon these two verses, one quickly gathers that the words “believe and be obedient” are equivalent to “put one’s trust in God.”

Just a perusal of Paul’s writings reveals that he employs the classical usage of “persuasion” in a number of passages. For example, Paul writes to the Christians in the southern part of Galatia: You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying (πειψθεσθαι<sup>[79]</sup> peiqesqai, “to be persuaded”) the truth (**Galatians 5:7**)? Even though the NIV translators employed the word *obeying*, nevertheless, the idea is still that of “trust” or “persuasion.” This dichotomy is sometimes difficult to differentiate. Still, Paul uses the word peiqw in the sense of “persuasion” (Classical Greek usage) in his writings. Paul sought to “persuade” men to follow Christ: “Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade (πειψθομεν<sup>[80]</sup> peiqomen) men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience” (**2 Corinthians 5:11**).

This expression (we persuade) is a regular Pauline expression in his confidence regarding certain matters not being sinful. He writes to the Romans: “As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced (πεψπεισμοι<sup>[81]</sup> pepeismai, “have been persuaded”) that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean” (**Romans 14:14**). Hopefully, the employment of repetition may be pardoned. Repetition is sometimes necessary since the minds of men and women are leavened by the traditional concept of “authority” leadership, which is still the prevailing opinion in much of Christendom. As a result of this kind of mentality, one quickly discovers that the vital truths of Christianity are secretly undermined or openly denied by religious leaders. Rudolf Bultmann is perfectly right when he pens:

1. πειψθω in the Active (apart from the Perfect).

a. The act. πειψθειν is used in the NT in the customary senses, not always sharply differentiated, which are found in Gk. usage from the time of Homer: “to convince,” “to persuade,” “to seduce (by persuasion),” “to corrupt.” The meaning “to convince” occurs in Plat.Resp., I, 327c; Thuc., III, 31, “to persuade” in Hom.II., 9, 345; Plat.Resp., II, 364b, “to seduce” in Hom.II., 6, 360, “to corrupt” in Hdt., VIII, 134; Lys., 21, 10. Indicative of the role of πειψθειν among the Gks. is the personification of Πειθωψ as a deity, e.g., Hes.Op., 73; Theog., 349. Whereas in Hom. πειψθειν appears only in the “determinative” sense “to persuade successfully,” “to convince,” in the period which follows the pres. usually expresses intention and the aor. success, though the context decides.<sup>[82]</sup>

## THE ENGLISH WORD “OBEY” IS TOO

### STRONG FOR THE GREEK WORD ΠΕΙΨΘΩ IN HEBREWS 13:17

As one examines the context, one observes that the Greek word that is translated “obey” is not the most appropriate word for the twenty-first



century. Lawrence Richards has given an excellent commentary on the tone of the word *obey* as used by the Holy Spirit:

#### Obey/Disobey

Often our understanding of the Bible is subtly colored. When we read the Bible, we often import a tone of voice in our reading. The words we read may seem harsh or impersonal, or strident, and demanding, not because they are so used in the Bible, but because we intuitively feel this way about the words themselves. This is particularly a danger when we read of obedience or disobedience. All too often the warmth and love that infuse the passages that speak of them are replaced by a cold impersonality that we bring with us that robs Scripture of its meaning. . . .

NT—The Greek words. The two different families of Greek words are linked with “obedience” and disobedience.” *Peiqw* means “to convince” or “to persuade.” It is logically linked with obedience; a person who is persuaded to obey a demand obeys it. This root is translated “obey” only three times in the NASB (Ro. 2:8; Heb. 13:17; Jam. 3:3. Another word from the same root is much stronger and is used of obeying a superior. That word is *peiqarcew*. It occurs four times in the NT (Ac. 5:29, 32; 27:21; Tit. 3:1).[\[83\]](#)

Richards correctly asserts that the idea is that leaders will seek to persuade other believers to be submissive to the teachings of the Messiah. This obedience is not submission to blind, dictatorial rule, but rather is a response to the love of God.

### “LEADING ONES”:

### THE GREEK WORD *HEGOUMENOIS*

### IN HEBREWS 13:17

Again, one must confront the context in order to arrive at the definition to be attached to the Greek word *Jhgoumenois*. Should this word be interpreted as “ruler” or “leader”? W. E. Vine's comments are very informative in dealing with this word *Jhgoumenois*. He writes:

1. HEMGEOMAI (ἡγεγρομαι , (2233)), akin to A, No. 1, is used in the present participle to denote a governor, lit., ‘(one) governing,’ Matt. 2:6; Acts 7:10.

2. HEMGEMONEUOM (ἡγεμονευω , (2230)), to be a *hegemon*, to lead the way, came to signify to be a governor of a Province; it is used of Quirinius, governor of Syria, Luke 2:2, R.V. (for the circumstances see under ENROLMENT); of Pontius

Pilate, governor of Judæa, 3:1.¶ In the first clause of this verse the noun *hegemonia*, a rule or sovereignty, is translated “reign;” Eng., hegemony.¶

*Note.* In Jas. 3:4, the verb *euthunom*, to make or guide straight, is used in the present participle, as a noun, denoting the “steersman” (R.V.) or pilot of a vessel, A.V., “governor.”[84]

Vine calls attention to the fact that the noun *ἡγεμῶν* *Jegemwn* came to be applied to a governor. But the verb *Jegemoneuw* means to “lead the way.” The translations that I have consulted, except the KJV, employs the word *leaders*, not rulers. An example of the word *Jegemwn* as being translated as “governor” is found in **Luke 22:20**:

Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power (*αρχή* *arch*, “rule”) and authority (*ἐξουσία* *exousia*) of the governor (*ἡγεμῶν* *Jegemonos*).

Paul, in his first letter to Corinth, speaks of the “rulers” of this age: “We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers (*ἀρχόντων* *arcontwn*) of this age, who are coming to nothing” (**1 Corinthians 2:6**). All over again, repetition is necessary sometimes in order to drive home a point that has been covered with a lot of underbrush of traditions for centuries. Even though the words of Jesus were previously cited, it is necessary to cite His words in full again in order for one to see at a glance how Jesus refuted the traditional belief that presently fills many Churches of Christ. Listen to Jesus as he discusses leadership—negative and positive:

<sup>25</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers (*ἀρχόντες* *arcontes*) of the Gentiles lord it over (*κατακυριεύουσιν* *katakurieuousin*) them, and their high officials exercise authority (*κατεξουσιάζουσιν* *katexousiazousin*) over them. <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (**Matthew 20:25-28**).

In seeking an answer to the word that is translated as “rule” in **Hebrews 13:17** by the KJV translators, one needs to analyze its usage in the Classical Greek age (900 BC to 300 BC), the Hellenistic biblical age (Septuagint [LXX], 270 BC to 250 BC), and the New Testament age.[85] Although the Classical Greek age sheds light upon the development of the word, still this is not a final criteria by which one determines how the writers in the New Testament employed the word. Ultimately the context is the deciding factor. The following is an example of the Classical, Hellenistic, and New Testament usages of the word *ἡγεψομαι* *Jegeomai*:

## Classical Greek Usage

In classical Greek, the  $\eta\sigma\gamma\epsilon\mu\omega\nu$  Jegemwn was a “guide” who showed the way or “one who did a thing first.”<sup>[86]</sup> The author of this particular article says, “In classical Greek a Jhghmon was a ‘guide’ who showed one the way or ‘one who did a thing first.’” It might also be a “leader” in the army of a chief or king. Josephus used the word to describe a “procurator” or “prefect” (Antiquities 18.3.1).<sup>[87]</sup>

The verb form  $\eta\sigma\gamma\epsilon\psi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  Jhgeomai carries the connotation of “lead, guide; think, consider, esteem, count.”<sup>[88]</sup> This author further calls attention to the classical and New Testament usage of this word:

### Classical Greek and Septuagint Usage

There are two primary uses of this word: (1) “to lead, rule, guide” and (b) “to think, consider, esteem, count.” In classical Greek Jhgeomai means “to lead” or “to guide,” while in the Septuagint and in the New Testament it is used for ruling or leading. In two instances in the Apocrypha (1 Maccabees 9:30 and 2 Maccabees 14:16) Jhgeomai refers to military commanders. In the Septuagint and contemporary non-Christian sources this word is used for officials, princes, or governors.<sup>[89]</sup>

### New Testament Usage

In both classical sources and the New Testament, Jhgeomai can be used for leaders of a religious community (e.g., Acts 15:22; Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24). The second meaning of the word can be seen in a variety of passages. In Acts 26:2; 2 Corinthians 9:5; Philippians 2:6; 2 Peter 1:13 it is translated “to think” or “thought.” In Philippians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; Hebrews 11:26 it is translated as “to esteem” or “esteeming.” The word is rendered “suppose” in Philippians 2:25, “count” or “counted” in Philippians 3:7, 8; 2 Thessalonians 3:15; Hebrews 10:29; 2 Peter 2:13; 3:9. It can also be translated “judge,” as in Hebrews 11:11, or they “that have rule over you” as in Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24.<sup>[90]</sup>

As one reads the above comments, one immediately realizes the necessity of consulting the context in making one’s determination as to the meaning to assign to a particular word in a given context. This word is multifaceted in that it has many meanings. This author’s last comments are taken from the KJV. This translation contradicts other Scriptures that refute this philosophy about Christian leaders as being rulers over God’s new humanity. Translators are not immune from their own traditions and are not immune from the influence of other translations. The following citations are given in order to demonstrate that one of the nuances associated with this word is the concept of leading or guiding, which is closer to the New Testament use of this word in **Hebrews 13:17**. For instance, Liddell-Scott defines the noun  $\eta\sigma\gamma\epsilon\mu\omega\nu$  jJhgemwn as “guide, leader, commander, and

chief.”<sup>[91]</sup> They also define ηΣγεψομαι Jhgeomai as “to go before, lead the way.”<sup>[92]</sup> William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich also give a diversity of meanings for this word Jhgeomai. But, in spite of this diversity, one discovers the basic meaning:

1. *lead, guide*; in our lit. only pres. ptc. (οJ) ηΣγουψμενῶ of men in any leading position (Soph., Phil. 386; freq. Polyb.; Diod. S. 1, 4, 72; Lucian, Alex. 44; 57.<sup>[93]</sup>

There are two occurrences of this Greek word in the Apocrypha that refers to military commanders:

So now we have chosen you today to take his place as our ruler (α[ρχοντα arconta) and leader (ηΣγουψμενον Jhgoumenon), to fight our battle (**1 Maccabees 9:30**).<sup>[94]</sup>

At the command of the leader (ηΣγουψμενου Jhgoumenou), they set out from there immediately and engaged them in battle at a village called Dessau.<sup>[95]</sup>

### Hellenistic Biblical Usage (LXX)

As mentioned above, ηΣγεψομαι Jhgeomai in the classical age employed this term principally in the sense of “guide” or to “lead.” On the other hand, the Septuagint (LXX) and the New Testament use this same word for “ruling” or “leading.” Only the context determines the nuance to be attached, not etymology. A common error among interpreters is the etymologizing fallacy, that is to say, the historical information with contemporary usage. The etymology (evolution) of a word may help to discover its sense, but only if it can be confirmed that the writer was cognizant of that etymology. The following comments by Darrell L. Bock are insightful in word analysis:

Word meanings can be examined in two ways. First, words can be studied historically by examining how they have been used in the past and how they have changed in meaning through time. This is called *diachronic word analysis*, the approach of TDNT and NIDNT. These two reference tools examine a word’s use beginning with the classical Greek period and continuing through the NT or even the patristic period. Examining words in this way indicates the possible senses that a term may have.

Second, words can also be studied within a given period (e.g., the intertestamental period, or pre—A.D. 70), or within the writings of a specific author (e.g., Paul, John, Matthew, Philo, or Josephus). This is called *synchronic word analysis* since the meaning of a word in its specific context, either temporal or literary, is the major concern of the exegete.<sup>[96]</sup>

The following quotes from the Old Testament illustrate the use of Jhgeomai in the sense of Master or king:

Then Micaiah answered, “I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, ‘These people have no master (ηΣγουψμινον Jhgouminon = /w{da\* a\*don. Let each one go home in peace”” (2 Chronicles 18:16).

He said: “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile my holy name—neither they nor their kings—by their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings (ηΣγουψμενοι Jhgoumenoi = El#m# m#l#k) at their high places.<sup>8</sup> When they placed their threshold next to my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices. So I destroyed them in my anger.<sup>9</sup> Now let them put away from me their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings (ηΣγουψμενοι Jhgoumenoi = El#m# m#l#k), and I will live among them forever (Ezekiel 43:7-9).

All of the above illustrations demonstrate that etymology alone is not sufficient to determine the meaning that one should assign to a particular word; context is the deciding factor. The following extract from Black should explain why one should exercise caution in seeking to determine word meanings from etymology alone:

Summarizing, then, the etymological method, used alone, cannot adequately account for the meaning of a word since meaning is continuously subject to change. . . . Above all, to know what a word means we must consider its context. Meaning is then extracted from the passage in which the word is found. . . . This confusion of word and concept, Barr complains, is one of the chief faults of *Kittle’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT). In treating individual words as if they were concepts, it implies (correctly) that the words themselves contain the various theological meanings assigned to them. But the meaning of words, as we have seen, is determined from the way they are used in context. These larger literary contexts, and not words, are the real linguistic carriers of theological meaning.<sup>[97]</sup>

If one wishes to understand the words peiqw and Jhgeomai in **Hebrews 13:17**, one must consult the context as well as other parallel passages that deal with leadership. The word that is usually translated as “rule over you” is looked at once more under the caption “Hellenistic Biblical Usage (New Testament)” in order to demonstrate the versatility of this word.

#### **Hellenistic Biblical Usage (New Testament)**

In both classical sources and the New Testament, Jhgeomai can be used for leaders of a religious community, not just rulers or governors. For

example, consider the choosing of certain men to go with Paul and Barnabas among the brethren following the council meeting at Jerusalem. In the following account, one discovers the same word as employed by the author of Hebrews applied by Luke to two individuals that were leaders within the Christian community:

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders (ἡσγουμενῶν jJhgoumenous[98]) among the brothers (**Acts 15:22**).

Remember your leaders (ἡσγουμενῶν jJhgoumenwn[99]), who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (**Hebrews 13:7**).

Obey your leaders (ἡσγουμενῶν Jhgoumenois[100]) and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (**Hebrews 13:17**).

Greet all your leaders (ἡσγουμενῶν Jhgoumenous[101]) and all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings (**Hebrews 13:24**).

As stated above, one observes that the Greek word ἡσγεῖν Jegeomai is varied in its meanings. The context is the deciding factor. The KJV's translation of this Greek word in **Hebrews 13: 7** and **17** contradicts Jesus' plain statement to His disciples about rulers in the world and the disciples' relationship to one another as servants. But to illustrate this point of diversity in meaning, one only has to consult other Scriptures. The following Scriptures demonstrate the variable use of Jegeomai.

But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers (ἡσγεμοῦσιν Jegemosin, "governors") of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler (ἡσγουῦμενῶ Jhgoumenos, "governor"[102]) [**Matthew 2:6**].

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to them, "**The kings of the Gentiles lord it over (κυριευουσιν kurieuousin) them; and those who exercise authority (ἐξουσιαζοντες exousiazontes) over them call themselves Benefactors.** <sup>26</sup> But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules (ἡσγουῦμενῶ Jhgoumenos,

“governing” or “leading”<sup>[103]</sup>) like the one who serves (Luke 22:24-26).

“King Agrippa, I consider (ηΣγημου Jhghmai, “think” or “to regard”<sup>[104]</sup>) myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews,<sup>3</sup> and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently (Acts 26:2-3).

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider (ηΣγηψατο Jhghsato, “deemed”<sup>[105]</sup>) equality with God something to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:6).

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered (ηΣγηψατο Jhghsato) me faithful, appointing me to his service (1 Timothy 1:12).

The KJV translates the above Scriptures respectively: Acts 15:22, “chief”; Hebrew 13:7, “which have the rule over you” Hebrews 13:17, “that have the rule over you”; Hebrews 13:24, “that have the rule over you”; Matthew 2:6, “Governor”; Luke 22:26, “chief”; Acts 26:2, “think”; Philippians 2:6, “thought”; and 1 Timothy 1:12, “counted.” On the other hand, the RSV translated the above Scriptures respectively: Acts 15:22, “leading men”; Hebrews 13:7, “leaders”; Hebrews 13:17, “leaders”; Hebrews 13:24, “leaders”; Matthew 2:6, “rulers” and “ruler”; Luke 22:26, “leader”; Acts 26:2, “think”; Philippians 2:6, “count”; and 1 Timothy 1:12, “judged.” One can see at a glance the latitude that translators have in seeking to convey the original. The following comments by F. Buschsehl also illustrates the diversity of meanings found in the word Jegeomai:

1. This word means a. “to lead,” b. “to think,” “believe,” “regard as.” In the NT it occurs in sense a. only in the present participle (see 2) . . . 2. a. Jhgoumenoi (mostly plural) is used for community leaders in Heb. 13:7, 17, 24. These are example of faith (v. 7) and pastors responsible to God (v.17); they are thus to be obeyed (v. 17), and are mentioned before the saints (v. 24). Yet according to Lk. 22:26 the Jhgoumenos is the one who serves—a necessary check on officialdom. Judas and Silas are called “leading men” among the brethren in Acts 15:22.<sup>[106]</sup>

It seems, at least from the context, that the best translation of the three occurrences of this word (Jhgeomai) in Hebrews, chapter 13, is best translated as “the ones leading you.” The basic concept is “to lead,” “to guide”; it is not “to rule.” Dictatorship or “exercising lordship over” is automatically ruled out because of what Jesus spoke to His disciples concerning their relationship to one another (see Matthew 20:25-28). Since



these Scriptures ([Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24](#)) do not identify “the ones leading you,” one may surmise that these could be evangelists, teachers, and teaching pastors (elders—older men). This obedience to their “leaders,” or “guides” come about by “feeling,” not “coercion.” One must interpret the text of [Hebrews 13](#) as it is written; one must not force an unnatural meaning to the text in order to force the traditional opinion of certain men as rulers within the company of the redeemed. Ray Stedman’s lengthy comments are worth citing as he calls attention to the KJV’s translation of the Greek word, *Jhgeomai*:

In 13:7, the author recalled to his reader’s minds the influence for good left by mentors who were now gone. In verse 17, he urges respect for and compliance with the godly leaders they now have. This verse, along with 1 Thessalonians 5:12, has been widely misunderstood because of the faulty translation of the KJV, NIV and other versions. The words obey (twice here) and submit and the phrase from 1 Thessalonians 5:12 “are over you in the Lord” have often fueled a harmful authoritarianism that has turned pastors into autocrats and congregations into personal domains. Such a twisted view of authority ignores entirely Jesus’ words to the disciples: “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you: but whoever would be great among you must be your servant.” (Mk 10:42-43, RSV). . . . Perhaps those words, “it shall not be so among you,” have been among the most ignored sayings of Jesus within the churches. Wherever leadership views itself as having God-given authority to impose rules or limitations on individual Christians or a congregation without their willing consent, these words of Jesus are being violated. Warnings against “lording it over the brethren” are given in 2 Corinthians 1:24 by Paul, in 1 Peter 5:3 by Peter, and in 3 John 9-10 by John. . . . The author’s basis for urging his readers to give willing response to their leaders is that the leaders are godly men who feel deeply their responsibility to lead wisely and lovingly as men who must give an account. This account must be given, not to the congregation, but to the Lord (1 Pet. 5:2-4).[\[107\]](#)

Unfortunately, today the English word *obey* is saddled with antibiblical nuances. It appears that the KJV conveys the ideas, concepts, notions, and presuppositions of the men behind the King James Version rather than the nuances intended by the author of Hebrews. Instead of translating the Greek participles—*Jhgoumenwn* ([v. 7](#)), *Jhgoumenois* ([v. 17](#)), *Jhgoumenous* ([v. 24](#))—as “rule over you” ([vv. 7, 17, 24](#), KJV), it would be more accurate to translate these participles as the “ones leading you.”[\[108\]](#) As stated above, the Greek text is simply: *τοι’ ηΣγουμενψων* *tois Jhgoumenwn* ([v. 7](#)), *τοι’ ηΣγουμενψνοϊ* *tois Jhgoumenois* ([v. 17](#)), and *τοι’ ηΣγουμενψνοϋ* *tois Jhgoumenous* ([v. 24](#)). All of these participles simply mean: “the ones leading you.” What is conspicuously absent in all three verses are the words: (1) *κατακυριεψω* *katakurieuw* [“lord it over”], and

(2) κατεξουσιάζω katexiysuazw [“have authority over”]. It is quite obvious that the translators of the KJV were guilty of smuggling into the text an alien idea to help the “cult of the bishops.” The KJV’s translation of these three verses in Hebrews is at variance with the teaching of Jesus (see [Matthew 20:25-28; 23:1-11](#)).

## DYNAMIC EQUIVALENT IN TRANSLATIONS

### The Verb “To Run”

What meaning should one attach to the word *peiqw*? The context is the deciding factor in seeking to determine the exact shade of meaning to be assigned to any particular word. Interpretive clues to the meaning of a word in a particular passage are found in the context. If, for example, someone uses the word *run* in a sentence, how does one go about interpreting the monosyllable word? One can almost hear the cry—context, context, and context. Yes, the context would be the determining factor in one uncovering the meaning.

Beekman and Callow add helpful insights to the word *run*. They develop the problems that translators run into when they seek to find the “dynamic equivalent”[\[109\]](#) in another language. These two scholars illustrate the difficulties that translators encounter with “dynamic equivalent” through the word *run*. The following is a powerful statement that calls attention to the dilemma:

“To run” also has a wide range of “prepositional collocations, such as “run out of the house,” run for office,” “run into trouble,” “run over a child,” “run below average.” No other word has this particular collocational range in English. . . . However, many of the collocations permissible for run in English are not permissible in Chol—Chol noses do not run, nor do their stockings, jellies, or motors. They do not run for office, or into debt, or trouble, or out of money or time or patience.[\[110\]](#)

Again, the context is the deciding factor in one’s seeking to understand the exact shade of meaning to be assigned to any particular word. Interpretive clues are generally provided by the context, which helps one to determine the meaning of a given word in a particular passage. If, for example, someone uses the word *run* in a sentence, the question that confronts everyone is: how should one interpret the word *run*? Yet again, the context would be the deciding factor. To illustrate this principle still further, one should take note of the word *run* in the following quote:

Each word in a language has a unique collocational[\[111\]](#) range, both qualitatively, in its selections, and quantitatively, in the number of possible collocations. Some words can collocate with only one generic class, or even only certain member of it; others can collocate widely. For instance, the verb “to run” collocates with several generic classes—humans, animals (with legs),

liquids, garments, for example—as subject, whereas the verb “to mew” only collocates with cats and certain birds, such as gulls and hawks, which have a cry like the mewling of a cat. “To run” also has a wide range of “prepositional” collocations, such as “run out of the house,” “run for office,” “run into trouble,” “run over a child,” “run below average.” No other word has this particular collocation range in English.[\[112\]](#)

This citation is given in order to illustrate the wide range of meaning attached to the verb “run.” As one reflects upon the verb “run,” it is apparent that any definition assigned to any word depends on the context. This, too, is also true of the Greek word *peiqw*, which also has a variety of meanings. It is true that one definition of this word is “obey,” but, as previously pointed out, W. E. Vine correctly calls attention to the nuance to be attached to this word: “The “obedience” suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion.”[\[113\]](#) It goes almost without saying that every definition hinges upon context. If one fails to take into consideration the intent of the author, then one violates sound principles of hermeneutics. Once more, what meaning should one attach to the Greek word *peiqw*?

Again, context is the final appeal to determine the meaning to be assigned to any word. It is not uncommon for a range of concepts to be imbedded within a single word. To arrive at a correct interpretation of a particular word, one must analyze the “bundles of components of meaning” (that is to say, the number and selection of meaning components combined in a word) and “semantic perspective” (that is to say, the semantic interrelationships that may exist between different words). Since words are semantically complex, it is often necessary to “unpack” the bundle of components when translating. This tactic ensures that the sense of the word in a given passage is not distorted. This paper seeks, through examples, to “unpack” the various Greek words employed by the author of Hebrews. Through an examination of the evolution of certain words found in this much abused text ([Hebrews 13:17](#)), one should be able to arrive at a correct understanding of the author’s intended meaning.

### **The Verb “To Dress**

Another illustration concerns the verb “to dress,” which has several senses. Just a quick glance at some of the ways in which this verb form is employed is quite striking. Again, Beekman and Callow illustrate with extreme clarity the problems that translators frequently incur in seeking ways to express the multiple use of words in some languages:

- To dress timber
- To dress ranks
- To dress poultry
- To dress a wound
- To dress a salad
- To dress a shop window

To dress oneself<sup>[114]</sup>

The following excerpt from the writings of Rudolph Bultmann explains the complexity that scholars face in searching for the exact word or phrase to translate a particular Greek word:

c. *πειθοψμεθα* in Hb. 13:18 (vl. *πεποιψθαμεν*) means “we are convinced”; this is also the meaning of *πειψθομαι* in Herm.s., 8, 11, 12. Ac. 26:26 is weaker: *λανθαψνειν γαψρ αυστοψν τουψτων ους πειψθομαι ουςθειψν*, “I believe that none of these things can be unknown to him.” The perf. especially has the sense “I am convinced” in Lk. 20:6; R. 8:38; 14:14 (*οἶδα και· πεψπεισμαι*); 15:14; 2 Tm. 1:5, 12; Hb. 6:9; Ign.Tr., 3, 2; Ign. Pol., 2, 3; Pol., 9, 2; Barn., 1, 4. The pass. aor. *πεισθησναι* is used similarly, cf. Ac. 5:40 after Gamaliel’s speech: *εξπειψσθησαν δε· αυστοψ*/, “they were persuaded by him” or “they followed him.” *πειψθεσθαι*, like *πεισθησναι*, can often mean “to be won over by persuasion,” “to follow,” Ac. 21:14; 23:21; 27:11; Ign.R., 7, 2; Herm.m., 12, 3, 3. In Lk. 16:31 following is almost obeying; here the *ουςδε*; ... *πεισθηψσονται*, which corresponds to the preceding *ουκ ακουουσιν*, is best translated: “they will not let themselves be told.” The meaning can be “to obey” in, e.g., Hb. 13:17: *πειψθεσθε τοις ηςγουμεψνοι υςμωςν και υςπειψκετε*, Jm. 3:3, of horses which obey the bit, and esp. R. 2:8: *τοι” ... πειθομεψνοι της αςδικιψα*/, where the antithesis *τοι” ... αςπειθουςσι της αςληθειψα*/ makes the sense perfectly clear. So also Gl. 5:7: *αςληθειψά μη πειψθεσθαι* (occasionally interpolated into 3:1 as well). *πειψθονται τοις ωςριςμεψνοι νοψμοῖ* occurs in Dg., 5, 10.<sup>[115]</sup>

Bultmann is correct in calling attention to the correctness, in some contexts, of translating the Greek word *πειψθεσθε* *peiquesqe*, (“to be persuaded,” **Hebrews 13:17**) as “to obey.” Even if one translates this Greek word *peiquesqe*<sup>[116]</sup> as “obey,” and not as “be persuaded,” the question that still confronts everyone is this: Are Christians to render blind obedience to the requirements of the so-called ruling elders? These leaders that Paul mentions that Christians are to listen to had to do with bringing one’s life into harmony with the ethical standards of Christianity and not reverting back to the Law as a means of one’s right standing before God. But this is not the situation today.

## CULTURAL CLASH

Not only should interpreters consider *diachronic*<sup>[117]</sup> word analysis (The examination of words studied historically by examining how they have been used in the past and how they have changed in meaning through time.), but should also consider “cultural clash” in one’s examination of any text. A “cultural clash” is not a collocational clash (Collocational clashes are lexical

combinations with components of meaning that are not compatible.). In other words, for instance, the following sentence is grammatically correct, but, at the same time, it contains four lexical collocations: “I never have heard a green horse smoke a dozen oranges.” An example of this phenomenon is the communion narratives reported by both Matthew (26:20) and Luke (22:14). Both authors employ the Greek word for “recline” (ἀνακλίνειν anakeinai), not “sat” as employed in the KJV. Why did the KJV use “to sit” rather than “to recline”?

In all likelihood the translators saw a cultural problem here, since reclining was/is not the position in the English-speaking world for eating. Yet, reclining is a historical reference to the cultural practice of that day. In spite of the cultural practice, the translators substituted “sat down” for “reclining,” which actually misrepresents what in point of fact took place. [118] This perception also sheds light upon the translators rendering of **Hebrews 13:17** to give absolute authority to the cultural practice observed in King James’ day—“obey” the dictatorial policies of the king and his bishops. In other words, it was culturally right to consider King James as the head of the church. Thus, one finds the wording, “obey them that have the rule over you” to coincide with the times, not the original intent of the author, that is to say, a blind obedience to the leaders. In spite of King James and his bishops’ political philosophy, this passage is still cited by many sincere godly leaders as justification for their dictatorial policies for absolute submission to whatever they dictate the Scriptures to teach.

### **JAMES 3:3 VERSUS HEBREWS 13:17**

Some individuals latch onto Bultmann’s comments on the use of  $\piειψθω$  peiqw in **James 3:3**, which reads: “When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us ( $\piειψθεσθαι$  peiqesqai[119]), we can turn the whole animal.” In the above quote by Bultmann, one cannot disagree with him that the best translation for **James 3:3** concerning the bit, or bridle, in the horse’s mouth is best translated “to obey.” Although the “bit” persuaded the horse, nevertheless, the final result is that the horse obeyed. But does this Scripture citation justify translating the Greek word in **Hebrews 13:17** with the same denotation (a direct specific meaning as distinct from an implied or associated idea), that is, the same meaning as employed in **James 3:3**? Is blind obedience the focal point of the Greek word  $\piειψθω$  in **Hebrews 13:17**? Do leaders put “bits” in the mouths of its members and then pull the reins in order to make one obey? Are the saints “horses” to be whipped into line at the whims of a few men?

The question that confronts everyone is: What were those Christians to obey? Once more, one must emphasize that the context is the answer to this apparently misunderstood Scripture. **Hebrews 13** reveals that they were (1) to continue in brotherly love [v.1]; (2) to practice hospitality to strangers [v.2]; (3) to minister to the prisoners [v. 4]; (4) to honor the marriage bed [v.4]; (5) to be content with possessions [vv. 5-6]; (6) to respect faithful leaders [vv. 7, 17]; and, (7) to imitate the behavior of their leaders [v. 7]. This kind of obedience and submission advanced by the author of Hebrews

is a far cry from the “popery” that is generally practiced by many leaders today within the various splinter groups within the warring factions of the Churches of Christ.

### **Abnormal Interpretation of James 3:3**

A former professor of mine recently cited **James 3:3** in which he spoke of horses that obey the “bit” in their mouths. This Christian brother alluded to this Scripture to justify “blind obedience” to a board of directors—called elders. This Scripture was mentioned to give validity to the current interpretation—absolute control by the elders—of **Hebrews 13:17**. As I listened to this sincere believer, one could not help but wonder if this passage (**James 3:3**) teaches that the congregation represents “horses” and that the elders are the “riders” and the “bits” are placed in the mouths of the congregation by the elders in order to force obedience to their dictates. One must keep in mind that the mere definition of a word does not necessarily define that particular word in its own context. The framework of the Scripture must also be consulted. How does one go about determining the particular meaning to attach to a particular word? Perhaps, the words of Thomas Hartwell Horne goes a long way in one’s uncovering the meaning that one should attach to a particular word. Horne is correct when he writes:

Although, in interpreting words that have various meanings, some degree may exist as to which of their different senses is to be preferred; yet the ambiguity in such cases is not so great, but that it may in general be removed, and the proper signification of the passage in question may be determined; for the SUBJECT MATTER—that is, the topic of which the author is treating—plainly shows the sense which is to be attached to any particular word.[\[120\]](#)

Another author, L. Berkhof, stresses the necessity of consulting parallel passages in seeking to determine the meaning of a given context. He has correctly observed the importance of comparison of parallel texts:

It is possible that neither the etymology of a word, nor the connection in which it is found, are sufficient to determine its exact meaning. In such cases, it is of paramount significance to study parallel passages, in which the same word is found in a similar connection, or in reference to the same general subject. Each passage consulted must, of course, be studied in its connection. . . . Moreover, it is necessary that the phrase or expression that calls for explanation be clearer in one passage than it is in the other, for it is impossible to explain an obscure passage by one that is equally dark. It is hardly necessary to remark in this connection that the interpreter should carefully guard against the mistake of trying to illustrate a perfectly clear passage by one that is less perspicuous.[\[121\]](#)

### **PROPER USE OF LEXICAL AIDS**



A word of caution is appropriate in the use of lexicons when one is seeking to understand the meaning of a word or words. Why is there such difficulty in translation of these passages (**vv. 7 & 17**)? An exact translation is not always an easy task, not even for scholars. For the beginning student of Greek, a word of caution is in order concerning lexical studies. Even though one must utilize lexical aids, nevertheless, one must understand that the lexicographer also assumes to some extent the role of an exegete when he defines words in a given context. Joseph Henry Thayer explains the difficulties involved in translation this way:

The nature and use of the New Testament writings require that the lexicographer should not be hampered by a too rigid adherence to the rules of scientific lexicography. A student often wants to know not so much the inherent meaning of a word as the particular sense it bears in a given context, or discussion:—or, to state the same truth from another point of view, the lexicographer often cannot assign a particular New Testament reference to one or another of the acknowledged significations of a word without indicating his exposition of the passage in which the reference occurs. In such a case he is compelled to assume, at least to some extent, the functions of the exegete, although he can and should refrain from rehearsing the general arguments which support the interpretation adopted, as well as from arraying the objections to opposing interpretations.<sup>[122]</sup>

David Allen Black's book dealing with linguistics is extremely helpful for an individual to arrive at a more correct comprehension of the author's intended meaning. He correctly says, "The easiest way to learn the principal terms in rhetoric is to study them with an example and, where applicable, a comparison with related terms."<sup>[123]</sup> Again, this writer is on target when he writes about "rhetorical language," that is to say, a language that must be interpreted in a way that does not contradict the intent of the author. This consciousness of idioms (The language peculiar to a people or to a district, community, or class.) helps one to understand the text more clearly. He correctly writes:

Discussion of idioms brings up the related matter of the consciousness and intention of the speaker. Not only do words mean many things to many people; they are also frequently charged with rhetorical connotations that sometimes say more than their lexical denotations. Thinking of meaning only in terms of lexical or syntactic items can easily lead to disregard for the crucial role of rhetorical features as signs having meaning for receptors.<sup>[124]</sup>

## **TWO WORDS SIMILAR IN MEANING:**

### **OBEY (ΥΠΑΚΟΥΨΩ) AND PERSUASION (ΠΕΙΨΘΩ)**

To illustrate a little more forcefully the intent of the author of



Hebrews, an examination of another word that is also translated “obey” (υΣπακουψω Jupakouw) should assist one in discovering the various nuances to attach to a particular word in translation. Although the word Jupakouw is a synonym<sup>[125]</sup> to peiqw, jJupakouw seems to be the stronger of the two words. Peiqw carries within its meaning the idea of “persuasion,” whereas Jupakouw carries within its meaning the idea of “to listen or give ear to,” which is still closely related to the word *persuasion*. Even though the two words carry similar concepts, yet they are not identical in meaning.

### Obey: υΣπακουψω Jupakouw

The Greek word Jupakouw is from the preposition υΣποψ Jupō (“under, by, by means of, about, subject to”) and ακουψω akouw (“hear, heed, listen, understand, learn, give, a hearing”). This word occurs approximately twenty-one times in the New Testament, eleven of which are attributed to Paul. A more accurate interpretation of this word can be gained by an examination of texts that employ the same expression. The following Scripture citations give one a feel for this particular word:

The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey (υΣπακουψουσιν j&upakouousin<sup>[126]</sup>) him!” (**Matthew 8:27**).

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey (υΣπακουψειν jJuakoueiv<sup>[127]</sup>) its evil desires (**Romans 6:12**).

Children, obey (υΣπακουψετε Jupakouete<sup>[128]</sup>) your parents in the Lord, for this is right (**Ephesians 6:1**).

Slaves, obey (υΣπακουψετε Jupakouete<sup>[129]</sup>) your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord (**Colossians 3:22**).

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey (υΣπακουψουσιν Jupakouousin<sup>[130]</sup>) the gospel of our Lord Jesus (**2 Thessalonians 1:8**).

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed (υΣπηψκουσεν Juhkousen<sup>[131]</sup>) and went, even though he did not know where he was going (**Hebrews 11:8**).

From the above Scriptures, it is noteworthy that the Greek word meaning “persuasion” is not the underlying connotation (The suggesting of a meaning by a word apart from the thing it explicitly names or describes.), or undertone. As one reflects upon **Matthew 8:27**, one quickly observes that the winds were not persuaded to obey Him. In the other five Scripture

citations, one also discovers that out-and-out obedience is the thrust of the various statements, not persuasion. To illustrate the nuances between the words peiqw (persuade or win over) and Jupakouw (obey), one's attention is called to children's obedience to parents. For example, before children are mature in judgment, the father or the mother may say, "You must obey (Jupakouw) my voice." In other words, there are no "ifs," "ands," or "buts" about it. One simply submits, no persuasion (in its strictest sense). On the other hand, if one's child is a teenager, then the father or the mother may seek to get the child to obey (peiqw) with logic.

Through reason, the teenager is persuaded to pursue a particular course of action. Both were submissive (younger and older), but from different perspectives. One may seek to persuade (peiqw) his/her child to follow a specific path that would be advantageous for the child. Yet, having said this, it is not "You obey (Jupakouw) my voice," but rather, the parents seeks to "persuade" the child to obedience. Persuasion (peiqw) is the best method to use to entice one to good performance, that is to say, persuasion that is based on what is in the best interest of the child. The tactic of persuasion is much more effective if the father or the mother are following their own advice of practicing what they want their teenagers to adhere to. So it is with the "obedience" in [Hebrews 13:17](#). No one objects to submission (υΣπειψκετε Jupeikete, "you submit"[\[132\]](#)) to holy men who encourage holy living. The leaders alluded to in [Hebrews 13:17](#) were practicing what they were seeking to persuade others to follow.

This submission is not submission to the abnormal interpretation of certain Scriptures by mind controllers (some elders, some preachers, and some editors of religious journals). Everyone must "obey," or "be persuaded" to put into practice ethical behavior that will honor God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This obedience is exactly what Paul calls attention to in his first letter to the Corinthians:

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—<sup>33</sup> even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. <sup>1</sup> Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ ([1 Corinthians 10:32-33](#)).

### **Obedience to Holiness: Peiqw (Persuaded)**

Everyone must "obey" in this sense of adherence to holiness, that is, everyone must "be persuaded" to imitate Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. As one seeks to capture the import of these two words, perhaps, the comments by W. E. Vine concerning the distinction between Jupakouw and peiqw will assist one in placing the proper interpretation upon the author of Hebrews. Vine's definitions are quite illuminating and to the point:

HUPAKOUM (υΣπακουω , (5219)), to listen, attend (as in Acts 12:13), and so, to submit, to obey, is used of obedience (a) to

God, Heb. 5:9; 11:8; (b) to Christ, by natural elements, Matt. 8:27; Mark 1:27; 4:41; Luke 8:25; (c) to disciples of Christ, Luke 17:6; (d) to the faith, Acts 6:7; the Gospel, Rom. 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:8; Christian doctrine, Rom. 6:17 (as to a form or mould of teaching); (e) to apostolic injunctions, Phil. 2:12; 2 Thess. 3:14; (f) to Abraham by Sarah, 1 Pet. 3:6; (g) to parents by children, Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; (h) to masters by servants, Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22; (i) to sin, Rom. 6:12; (j) in general, Rom. 6:16.[\[133\]](#)

PEITHOM (πεισθω , (3982)), to persuade, to win over, in the Passive and Middle Voices, to be persuaded, to listen to, to obey, is so used with this meaning, in the Middle Voice, e.g., in Acts 5:36, 37 (in ver. 40, Passive Voice, “they agreed”); Rom. 2:8; Gal. 5:7; Heb. 13:17; Jas. 3:3. The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion. “*Peithom* and *pisteuom*, ‘to trust,’ are closely related etymologically; the difference in meaning is that the former implies the obedience that is produced by the latter, cp. Heb. 3:18, 19, where the disobedience of the Israelites is said to be the evidence of their unbelief. Faith is of the heart, invisible to men; obedience is of the conduct and may be observed. When a man obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that in his heart he believes God. Of course it is persuasion of the truth that results in faith (we believe because we are persuaded that the thing is true, a thing does not become true because it is believed), but *peithom*, in N.T. suggests an actual and outward result of the inward persuasion and consequent faith” (The underscored sentence is mine—RDB)[\[134\]](#)

Just a casual reading of Vine’s definitions reveals the distinctions that exist between the two words. On the one hand, *Jupakouw* is more the concept of “obey,” but, on the other hand, *peiqw* is more of the concept of “persuasion.” His comments on *peiqw* fits the context of [Hebrews 13:1-17](#). The “obedience” in [Hebrews 13: 7](#) and [17](#) results from one’s persuasion through the influence, guidance, and exhortation of the religious leaders, not through dictatorial authority. Why were the believers exhorted to “be persuaded” by their leaders? As stated above, [verse 7](#) holds the key: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” The “leading ones” (ἡγούμενων *Igoumenwn*) were holy men and men “full of faith.” Christians were to be influenced by the leader’s life style. This obedience is not from irrational adherence to a certain group of men or leaders’ life styles., but rather the submission is to the lifestyle of men who imitate Christ. Ray Stedman is perfectly right when he writes:

Several things should be noted about Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12. The word “obey” comes from the Greek *peiqw*, “to persuade.” The present imperative middle form, used here, means “permit oneself to be persuaded,” yield to

persuasion.” It definitely does not mean to blindly follow orders. The phrase “those who are over you in the Lord” should simply be “your leaders in the Lord.” There is no thought of being “over” anyone, or other being “under” a leader. The authority of a Christian leader is not command authority, but servant leadership. A servant has authority, as Jesus said he had, because he awakens by his living service a desire to comply. Or he is persuasive because of his logic or knowledge.[\[135\]](#)

### Hearing God More Accurately in Hebrews 13:17

How can one make an intelligent interpretation of the word *obey* in [Hebrews 13:17](#)? The answer is the context. One must never seek to interpret a passage in isolation from its context. Even though this rule is a basic principle of hermeneutics, nevertheless, this essential rule is frequently overlooked in one’s investigation into the meaning of a particular word. Powerful leaders frequently have difficulty in hearing God’s Word accurately. It is not uncommon for the religious leaders’ interpretation to become normative and then to be passed on to the members of the congregation as authoritative. The traditions of the church concerning [Hebrews 13:17](#) still make it difficult, if not impossible, for many Christians to read the Word of God accurately. So many Christians, including professors in religious institutions, are so used to reading the Bible as they have been taught by generations of interpreters that it is almost impossible to dig out the underbrush that prevents sound interpretation. Having said this, one must learn to reevaluate and reinterpret a sacred text that has been handed down by the church fathers. The words of Jimmy Allen about context is on target:

A word must be defined in the light of its context. A text taken out of context is a pretext. . . . Context takes priority over everything else in determining word meanings.[\[136\]](#)

### THE TEXT SERVES AS A WINDOW FOR CORRECT INTERPRETATION

Frequently, believers do word studies without considering the language used or the background of the passage before drawing a conclusion as to the meaning of the word(s) employed by the author. If one is to do sound exegesis, then one must have a considerable grasp of many issues, which includes historical events in order to understand adequately the dialogues in Scripture. Since the individuals to whom the documents were intended were generally competent to manage such a discourse, the interpreter must place himself within the setting of the receivers of the document. Again, the context must be consulted. The text serves as a window through which one peers into the historical period. For one to ignore the setting, or framework, is to decontextualize[\[137\]](#) the wording of the author.

In order to interpret the Scriptures correctly, the exegete must have a background for biblical interpretation. In other words, there must be a set of standard principles, methods, and procedures for explaining accurately the meaning of the text. One of the best ways to gain this kind of information is to consult commentaries and Bible dictionaries. These books should assist one in a more exact interpretation of Scripture. Nevertheless, one ought to be conscious that a head count of translations, commentaries, and dictionaries do not determine the meaning, but rather they do assist one in focusing on context in order to arrive at a more faithful explanation of the text. One should not violate the author's Spirit-given sovereignty in his choice of words. One ought to allow the context to control his/her theological conception.

In the development of one's studies concerning definitions, one is obligated to keep in mind that there is no such thing as an original meaning apart from specific contextual settings. Far too many believers participate in illegitimate etymological studies.[\[138\]](#) With this perception of contextual studies, the question is: What meaning should one attach to the Greek word *πειqw* as employed by the author of Hebrews? Is it "persuasion" or is it "obey." One cannot deny, as stated earlier, that obedience is expected from the believers, but this obedience is not blind obedience to rulers. The basic concept of the word employed by the author is "persuasion." Some sincere Christians have latched on to the English word "obey" in order to whip people into obedience to their concept of authority figures. This word is employed in such a way as to give credence to fit their (elders, preachers, and editors of religious journals) own agenda—the molding of one's thinking. Once more, as cited above, one would do well to consult Rudolph Bultmann as he argues convincingly as to the true import of *πειqw*:

#### 1. *πειψθw* in the Active (apart from the Perfect).

- a. The act. *πειψθειν* is used in the NT in the customary senses, not always sharply differentiated, which are found in Gk. usage from the time of Homer: "to convince," "to persuade," "to seduce (by persuasion)," "to corrupt." The meaning "to convince" occurs in Plat.Resp., I, 327c; Thuc., III, 31, "to persuade" in Hom.II., 9, 345; Plat.Resp., II, 364b, "to seduce" in Hom.II., 6, 360, "to corrupt" in Hdt., VIII, 134; Lys., 21, 10. Indicative of the role of *πειψειν* among the Gks. is the personification of *Πειθωψ* as a deity, e.g., Hes.Op., 73; Theog., 349. Whereas in Hom. *πειψειν* appears only in the "determinative" sense "to persuade successfully," "to convince," in the period which follows the pres. usually expresses intention and the aor. success, though the context decides.[\[139\]](#)

#### 2. *πειψθομαι*.

- a. In the NT, as in Gk., *πειψqομαι* means first "to trust," "to rely on" (Hom.Od., 20, 45; Hdt., VII, 144 [tw' / qew' / !]), also "to be convinced, persuaded" (Soph.Phil., 624; Plat.Prot., 388a), consequently also "to believe" (Hdt., I, 8; Plat.Ap., 25e) or "to

follow” (Xen.An., VII, 3, 39) (in the sense “to be tractable”); this sense “to follow” can even have the further meaning “to obey” (Hom.II., 1, 79; Soph.Ant., 67; Plat.Ap., 29d: πειψομοι δε· μαλλλον τωθ θεωθ η] υΣμιθν).[\[140\]](#)

- c. πειθοψμεθα in Hb. 13:18 (vl. πεποιψθαμεν) means “we are convinced”; this is also the meaning of peivqomai in Herm.s., 8, 11, 12. Ac. 26:26 is weaker: λανθαψνειν γαΨρ αυστοΨν τουψτων ους πειψθομοι ουςθεψν, “I believe that none of these things can be unknown to him.” The perf. especially has the sense “I am convinced” in Lk. 20:6; R. 8:38; 14:14 (οιδα και· πεψπεισμοι); 15:14; 2 Tm. 1:5, 12; Hb. 6:9; Ign.Tr., 3, 2; Ign. Pol., 2, 3; Pol., 9, 2; Barn., 1, 4. The pass. aor. πεισθηθσναι is used similarly, cf. Ac. 5:40 after Gamaliel’s speech: εξπειψσθησαν δε· αυζτω’/, “they were persuaded by him” or “they followed him.” πειψθεσθαι, like peisqh`nai, can often mean “to be won over by persuasion,” “to follow,” Ac. 21:14; 23:21; 27:11; Ign.R., 7, 2; Herm.m., 12, 3, 3. In Lk. 16:31 following is almost obeying; here the ουςδε; ... πεισθηψσονται, which corresponds to the preceding ουςκ ακουψουσιν, is best translated: “they will not let themselves be told.” The meaning can be “to obey” in, e.g., Hb. 13:17: πειψθεσθε τοιθ ηΣγουμεψνοι υΣμωθν και· υΣπειψκετε, Jm. 3:3, of horses which obey the bit, and esp. R. 2:8: τοιθ ... πειθομεψνοι τηθ ακδικιψα/, where the antithesis τοιθ ... ακπειθουθσι τηθ ακληθειψα/ makes the sense perfectly clear. So also Gl. 5:7: ακληθειψα μη πειψθεσθαι (occasionally interpolated into 3:1 as well). πειψθονται τοιθ ωΣριςμεψνοι νοψμοι occurs in Dg., 5, 10.[\[141\]](#)

One cannot disagree with Bultmann in his translation of peiqw as “obey,” but, at the same time, one must also take cognizance of the nuance behind the Greek word employed by the author of Hebrews—“be persuaded.” The underlying meaning of this word is “persuasion” that is exercised on the part of the believer to a life of holiness that is in conformity with biblical faith. This obedience is submission to holy living, not to the interpretation of fallible men as if they were infallible interpreters. The traditional interpretation contradicts Jesus’ statement to the apostles in their arguments concerning who was the greatest (see above [Matthew 20:25-28](#)).

These two Scriptures ([Hebrews 13:17](#); [Matthew 20:25-28](#)) do not contradict one another. But, if one interprets [Hebrews 13:17](#) with a wooden literalness—without regard to context—then one finds an apparent contradiction in the English text. When two Scriptures come into conflict, the obscure must be interpreted in light of the clear, not the reverse. In [Hebrews](#), one has a dark passage ([13:17](#)), if taken in isolation from its context. Yet, on the other hand, one discovers a light passage in [Matthew 20:25-28](#). If one interprets the Greek words peiqw and Jhgomai respectively



as “obey” and “rule over you,” then this translation contradicts the words of Jesus to His disciples as recorded by Matthew (**20:25-28** and **23:8-11**). But, on the other hand, if one translates the Greek words as “be persuaded by the ones leading you,” then this translation does not contradict the plain teachings of Jesus in Matthew.

To illustrate and to assist one in a correct interpretation, or understanding, of the passages in **Hebrews** (**13:7** & **17**), then one should consult Matthew—pardon the repetition—as he records one of the last speeches of Jesus, shortly before His crucifixion. In this pericope, Jesus reacted to those who desired to elevate themselves to places of preeminence. An analysis of this unit in the Matthean passage should shed some light on the proper exegesis of **Hebrews 13:17**. Listen to the words of Jesus as He addresses a group of religious leaders that desire the limelight:

But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi’ (ρᾶββι Jrabbi), for you have only one Master (διδῶσκαλῶ didaskalos) and you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup> And do not call anyone on earth ‘father’ (πατηρ pathr), for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> Nor are you to be called ‘teacher’ (καθηγηται kaghgatai “leaders”), for you have one Teacher, the Christ. <sup>11</sup> The greatest among you will be your servant. <sup>12</sup> For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (**Matthew 23:8-12**).

Jesus absolutely refuses His disciples the use of “rabbi,” “teacher,” or even “father” to be employed as titles to distinguish themselves from other believers. He did not want any of the disciples to elevate themselves above others. No one was allowed to adopt the terms “Rabbi,” “master” (teacher), or “father” as epithets to separate or distinguish themselves from one another. Why? Listen to Jesus as He responds: “You are all brothers” (**23:8**).

Christians frequently cite Scriptures that appear, at first glance, to sustain their position of individuals exercising authority over other individuals. One such example is the citation of **Titus 2:15**. The professor, mentioned above, that cited **James 3:3** to try to provide evidence that the word peiqw in **Hebrews 13:17** has the same connotation also cited **Titus 2:15** to show that Titus was to exercise “authority” (KJV) over those to whom he labored. In this passage, Paul wrote: “These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority (παῦσι ἐπιταγή pashs epigaghs, “all command”). Do not let anyone despise you.”

But, is this the meaning (authority over others) that one is to attach to the Greek word that is translated as “authority.” The idea in the Greek text is not so much “authority” as it is with “all impressiveness.” One does not object to someone speaking the Word with all impressiveness or “with all command” (“authority,” KJV, **Titus 2:15**), but this example does not uphold the ungodly doctrine that Christians are to give their minds and consciences



into the hands of certain individuals for their keeping. If one does adopt the word *authority*, one must be conscious that the “authority” had to do with the Word of God, not the individual exercising dominion over one’s faith, which Paul refutes in his **second letter** to the **Corinthians (1:24)**.

The following translation captures the essence of **Titus 2:15**: “You must be continually speaking these things, and continually encouraging and exposing with every requirement [*from God*]! You must never let anyone slight you!”<sup>[142]</sup> The Greek word is not ἐξουσία *exousia*, but ἐπιταγή *epitagh*. As one reflects upon the words of Jesus, one does not come away with the idea that certain individuals are given dictatorial powers in order to force them into compliance with their opinions about controversial issues that currently divide Christians. The prevailing interpretation that elders “rule over” God’s people is totally unbiblical. Another Scripture that is frequently cited to uphold the doctrine of authoritarian leadership is **1 Timothy 5:17**. The following is a brief review of this Scripture in order to determine if this Scripture is translated according to the intent of the author.

### **1 TIMOTHY 5:17:**

#### **ELDERS THAT RULE (Ἰποῖσθημι *Proisthmi*) WELL**

**Hebrews 13:7, 17**, and **24** are not the only Scriptures that are appealed to in order to uphold the doctrine that elders are to “rule” over God’s people. Many sincere Christian leaders give credence to their demands of “rule” by citing **1 Timothy 5: 17**. Even though this passage, on the surface, appears to uphold the traditional view, nevertheless, one must again go back to the Greek text in order to set the record straight once more. The KJV reads: “Let the elders who rule (προεστώτῃ *proestwtēs*, “direct,” “care for,” or “having taken the lead”<sup>[143]</sup>) well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.” This Greek word carries a number of nuances—depending on the context. This particular word carries various distinctions, for example, “to lead,” “to manage,” “to govern,” “to give attention to,” “to stand before,” “to lead,” “to care for,” and “to engage in.”<sup>[144]</sup>

One can easily see that one must be careful in seeking the exact nuance that the author intended to convey to his readers. Leaders often fail to do their homework before advancing a notion that is totally out of harmony with the Scriptures as a whole. Because of one’s failure to grasp the import of the word as utilized by Paul, then this insufficiency has resulted or contributed to a monumental misunderstanding of leadership among God’s people. To help each one to grasp the significance of this word, one’s attention is called to the use of this word in the classical Greek usage, the Hellenistic biblical usage (LXX), and the Hellenistic biblical usage (New Testament). An analysis of the various usages in various contexts should set the tone for a more accurate interpretation of Paul’s words to Timothy.

## Classical Greek Usage—Προϋστημι Proisthmi

Προϋστημι proisthmi (“to stand before or over”) is used of those who “stood before” an army in order to lead or of those who “stood over” the affairs of government. It is also employed in the sense of “support,” “help,” and “care” offered by those in prominent positions.<sup>[145]</sup> It appears that the KJV interpreted the Greek word in **1 Timothy 5:17** as someone who “stood over,” rather than someone who took the lead out of concern for the souls under their oversight. Hopefully, this study of the various usages of this word will help one to formulate an interpretation that conforms to the Word of God.

## Hellenistic Biblical Usage (LXX)—Προϋστημι Proisthmi

This verb (proisthmi) occurs eight times in the Septuagint (LXX). In the Complete Biblical Library, one reads the following comment: “In most cases it is used substantively (as a participle) to indicate the head of a house (**2 Samuel 13:17** [LXX, 2 Kings 13:17]).”<sup>[146]</sup> The author of **2 Samuel** writes:

He called his personal servant (προεστηκοῦντα proesthkota<sup>[147]</sup>) and said, “Get this woman out of here and bolt the door after her” (**13:17**).

This word also reflects the meaning of “to stand before” in **Isaiah 43:24**:

Neither hast thou purchased for me victims for silver, neither have I desired the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou didst stand before (προεψστή proesths, “to set before”<sup>[148]</sup>) me in thy sins, and in thine iniquities.<sup>[149]</sup>

In **1 Maccabees 5:19**, one also finds that the word is employed in the sense of one taking charge of the people in Jerusalem in order to defend the city against an impending assault.

Unto whom he gave commandment, saying, Take ye the charge (προψστήτε prosthte<sup>[150]</sup>) of this people, and see that ye make not war against the heathen until the time that we come again.<sup>[151]</sup>

**Proverbs 26:17** also uses a form of proisthmi to designate a man who “tries to take charge” of other people’s squabbles and thus interferes in something he knows nothing about. The Scripture reads:

Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles (προεστωψ proestws<sup>[152]</sup>) in a quarrel not his own.

## Hellenistic Biblical Usage (New Testament)—Προϋστημι Proisthmi

Proisthmi appears eight times in the New Testament, all in Paul's writings. Half of this number is found in **1 Timothy**.

He must manage (προϊσταμενον proistamenon<sup>[153]</sup>) his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect (**1 Timothy 3:4**).

(If anyone does not know how to manage (προστη'ναι prosthnai<sup>[154]</sup>) his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) [**1 Timothy 3:5**].

A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage (προϊσταμενοι proistamenoi<sup>[155]</sup>) his children and his household well (**1 Timothy 3:12**).

The elders who direct the affairs (προεστώτῃ proestwtēs<sup>[156]</sup>) of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching (**1 Timothy 5:17**).

In the above passages from **First Timothy**, Paul utilizes proisthmi in setting forth the qualifications for bishop (ἐπισκοπον episkopon, “overseer”) [**1 Timothy 3:4-5**], the deacons (διακονοι diakonoi) [**3:12**], and elders (πρεσβυτερο presbuteros, “older men”) [**5:17**—all are required to manage (“rule” KJV) their households well. The emphasis is upon the quality of their leadership, not dictatorial rulership. It is noteworthy that the KJV translates “ruleth” (**3:4**), “to rule” (**3:5**), “ruling” (**3:12**), and “rule” (**5:17**) for the Greek word proisthmi, rather than “manage.” Again, one witnesses, so it seems, the “cult of the bishops” in the translations of these passages. The import of these Scriptures is simply that the leader must respectfully lead or guide his family; otherwise, he is not fit to stand before God's house to care from them.

This particular Greek word simply means, “to stand before,” “to lead,” or “to care for.” It appears that this word was shaded by the KJV translators to promote the “cult of the bishops,” who were on the translating committee for King James, the head of the Church of England. The basic idea associated with this word is not “rule,” but rather the concept of “to care for.” As one investigates this word proisthmi, the question that confronts every interpreter is: Does “to care for” convey the intended meaning of Paul's use of this word to Timothy? Or does this word imply that one is to dominate, dictate, legislate, mandate, or exercise authority over the Christian community? Since this word conveys a variety of meanings, it is essential that the biblical exegete consider the context in order to try to arrive at a correct use of the terminology.

Just a casual glance at the context of **1 Timothy 3:4** reveals that Paul is speaking of one who cares for his household, or he is one who is concerned to lead his household in a way that leads to holiness. This verse

does not seem to speak of this individual ruling his household with an iron fist. The NIV translates this verse: “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.” Again, one discovers a similar use of the word in relation to deacons: “A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well” (3:12). In all of the above citations from Paul, one quickly observes that the idea behind the word pertains to one being an example to his family. The other four occurrences of this word appear in the following Scriptures (NIV):

If it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern (οΣ προι>σταψμενö Jo proistajmenos, “the one taking the lead”[157]) diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully (Romans 12:8).

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you (προι>σταμεψνοü proistamenous, “taking the lead”[158]) in the Lord and who admonish you (1 Thessalonians 5:12).

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote (προι>στασθαι proistasqai, “to maintain”[159]) themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone (Titus 3:8).

Our people must learn to devote (προι>στασθαι proistasqai, “to maintain”[160]) themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives (Titus 3:14).

The KJV translates proisthmi as “ruleth” (Romans 12:8), “over you” (1 Thessalonians 5:12), “to maintain” (Titus 3:8), and “to maintain” (Titus 3:14). The NRSV translates Romans 12: 8 as follows: “the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”[161] The following paraphrase of Romans 12:8 is also to the point of the context: “If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously.”[162] The Revised Standard Version is also on target when it translates: “He who gives aid, with zeal.”[163] The NASB also captures the true intent of the word proisthmi in its rendering of Romans 12:8: “He who leads, with diligence.”[164] Reicke seems to have shown conclusively that proisthmi in the New Testament conveys the concept of “to lead.” He pungently captures the core meaning of this word:

3. The eight instances of proi>vsthmi in the NT contain only intransitive forms of the verb. They occur in the Pauline corpus and fall under the nuances a.-c. to which special attention has been directed above (→ 700, 22 ff.).

In most cases προῖστημι seems to have sense a. “to lead” (→ 700, 22 ff.) but the context shows in each case that one must also take into account sense b, “to care for” (→ 700, 29 ff.). This is explained by the fact that caring was the obligation of leading members of the infant Church. Thus Paul says in R. 12:8: οὗ μεταδίδου· ἐν ἀπλοψτητι, οὗ προῖσταψμενὸ ἐν σπουδηῖ, οὗ ἐλεωθῇ ἐν ἰσλαροψτητι. Here the second expression is plainly analogous to the other two, which both refer to works of love. The meaning, then, is somewhat as follows: “He who gives let him do so with simplicity, he who cares with zeal, he who does good with cheerfulness.” Yet the whole passage is speaking of the gifts of grace imparted to different office-bearers, so that οἱ προῖσταψμενοὶ are a special group separated by the Spirit for the primary task of caring for others (cf. ἀντιληψίμει, κυβερνηψεῖ, 1 C. 12:28). The position is the same in 1 Th. 5:12: προῖσταψμενοὶ. According to the context the task of the προῖσταψμενοὶ is in large measure that of pastoral care, and the emphasis is not on their rank or authority but on their efforts for the eternal salvation of believers. How far there is already reference to specific offices in these passages from R. and 1 Th. is a matter of lively debate; the endowment with the Spirit presupposed in R. is no argument against this thesis, since Spirit and office are not antithetical in the NT, e.g., Mt. 7:29; Ac. 6:3. In 1 Tm. again, where the verb and especially the participle occurs repeatedly, the ideas of guiding and caring are both present. In this case the reference is quite definitely to official leaders in the churches. 1 Tm. 3:4 describes an acceptable bishop as a man who rules (προῖσταψμενον) his own house well and can keep his children under control. We then read: “If a man know not how to rule (προστησῶναι) his own house, how shall he take care of (ἐπιμεληψεταί) the church of God?” v. 5. Here, then, “to rule” is the same as “to take care of.” Cf. also 5:8: “But if he provide not (προνοεῖ) for his own, and specially for those of his own house ...” Then 1 Tm. 3:12 describes good deacons as those who care well (προῖσταψμενοὶ) for their own houses (families and servants). The author certainly has in view the authority of the head of the household (*patria potestas* → V, 949 ff., 961 ff., 1004 f.) but his attention is primarily directed, not to the exercise of power, but to the discretion and care to be shown therein. Finally, 1 Tm. 5:17 says that καλῶς προεστῶτε πρεσβυτεροὶ (→ 666, 26 ff.) are worthy of double reward, especially those who labour in the word and teaching. The context shows that the reference is not merely to elders who rule well but especially to those who exercise a sincere cure of souls. The second half of the verse makes their diligence in pastoral care the criterion. This is not to deny that here, too, the προῖstavmenoi have a special dignity and play a leading role as elders. In all these instances, however, the verb has in the NT the primary senses of both “to lead” and “to care for,” and this agrees with the distinctive nature of office in the NT, since according to Lk. 22:26 the one who is chief (οὗ

ἡΣγουνψμενῶ) is to be as he who serves.[\[165\]](#)

From the above citation, his specific comments on the import of this particular word in its relationship to leaders is significant: “According to the context the task of the προῖστοψμενοι is in large measure that of pastoral care, and the emphasis is not on their rank or authority but on their efforts for the eternal salvation of believers.” The “leading ones” are those who have a sincere, genuine, true, trustworthy interest in seeking to “serve” God’s people. They want to lead, conduct, direct, and govern Christians in their daily walk with the Lord. In short, spiritual leaders want to “care for” God’s saints, not rule God’s saints. The thought behind the comments of Paul is that leaders are to exercise sincere care for the souls of God’s people. Again, it goes almost without saying, whenever one seeks to interpret a word, one must seek its meaning within the context. The thought is that “leading ones” are “to protect,” “to represent,” “to care for,” “to help,” and “to further one’s spiritual walk.”

## CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed the various words upon which many sincere Christians have wrenched out of context in order to give credibility to the current traditions within the Churches of Christ that certain men have dominion over one’s faith. As a result of this misapplication and twisting of Scripture, divisions have proliferated when thinking Christians refused to allow certain men to exercise authority over their own minds. One has observed, in this essay, that Christians do not object to obedience demanded by religious leaders concerning instructions about holy living. What Christians do object to is: individuals assuming to “lord it over” or to “exercise authority over” God’s heritage.

All Christians are to respond positively to the leadership of godly men concerning holiness. Yes, in this area every Christian is to submit. Men who are appointed or assume the role of leadership must be men who are “full of faith.” Christians want to imitate this kind of life style. This is the reason that the author of Hebrews writes: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (**Hebrews 13:7**). This essay is written in order to help leaders become the kind of individuals that the Holy Spirit desires in order that men and women might model their lives after men filled with the Holy Spirit. Even though Paul could say, “Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm” (**2 Corinthians 1:24**), yet, he could also say,

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—<sup>33</sup> even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.<sup>1</sup> Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ (**1 Corinthians 10:32-33**).

There is nothing wrong with the English word *obey* if this word is

understood correctly within its context. The problem many Christians have with the traditional interpretation is that the word *obey* is employed by many leaders in the same sense that children must obey their parents. This mentality can lead to a David Koresh' cult or a Jim Jones' cult in which the members of the fellowship surrender total obedience to the leader. This essay has sought to examine all of the words frequently cited by many well meaning Christians that appear on the surface to give validity to the demands of some spiritual leaders. As one reflects upon any Greek word, one must always remember that words frequently carry several nuances; thus, one must always consult the context in order to try to arrive at a definition that is harmony with the Word of God.

One cannot deny that the Christian community needs leadership. God gave gifted men and women to the early church in order to bring the church to maturity in their faith and their faithfulness (see [Ephesians 4:11-13](#)). The Christian church still needs men and women who have dedicated their lives to the study and ministry of God's Word. Hopefully, this essay will assist leaders in their endeavors to lead God's people in a way that is in keeping of Holy Scripture—not as rulers, but as examples of Christian living.[\[166\]](#)



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[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.

[2] See Mary Alice Chrnalogar, *Twisted Scriptures: Breaking Free from Churches That Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, revised edition 2000), 189-200, for an excellent analysis of mind control practiced by many

leaders within the Christian church. See also Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches That Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) and *Recovering from Churches That Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

[3] One does not deny that leaders can take action against other individuals if they live a profligate life or deny the deity of Jesus. All Christians must take a stand upon these issues. The problem comes when elders decide a particular interpretation of a Scripture that does not deal with one of the above issues—immorality and denial that Jesus has come in the flesh.

[4] For a detailed analysis of Romans 14:1—15:7 and 1 Corinthians 8, see Dallas Burdette, “Watch Out for Those Who Cause Division,” [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.freedominchrist> (accessed 3 January 2002), located under the caption MISAPPLIED/TWISTED SCRIPTURES.

[5] Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1982), 265.

[6] Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 58.

[7] See Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 29-68, in which they discuss the “difficulties in hearing the text” and “the forgotten interpreters.” I am indebted to these two individuals for their insightful analysis on the problems that hinder correct interpretation.

[8] *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

[9] Semantical studies pertain to words and their contextual meanings or dimensions within the biblical text.

[10] Owen L. Crouch, *God Has Spoken: Expository Preaching and Teaching, Hebrews* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1990), 446.

[11] Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 586.

[12] Leon Morris, *Hebrews*, in Frank Gaebelein, Gen. Ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol., 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 152.

[13] E. Schuyler English, *Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (South Carolina: Southern Bible House, 1955), 501.

[14] See Dallas Burdette, “Divorce Sayings in the Synoptics and Paul,” [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.freedominchrist.net> (accessed



3 January 2002], located under caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under caption DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE.

[15] For an example of what this kind of mind control can lead to, see Dallas Burdette, “David Koresh: An American Messiah?” [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.freedominchrist.net> [accessed 12-7-2001], located under caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under the caption WORLD RELIGIONS AND CULTS.

[16] For my analysis of Ephesians 5:19 and instrumental music, see Dallas Burdette, “God Is A Lover of Music: Psalm 150” [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.freedominchrist.net> [accessed 12-07-2001], located under BIBLICAL STUDIES and then under the caption OLD TESTAMENT and then under the caption PSALMS.

[17] Private email to Dallas Burdette from William H. (Bill) Smith Jr., dated Tuesday, December 25, 2001, 9:42am. This citation is quoted with the permission of Bill Smith.

[18] Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, 264.

[19] Peterson, Eugene H., *The Message*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publishing Group) 1997.

[20] This mind-set resulted in the countless loss of life. Hundreds were tortured and put to death because they thought for themselves. For an overview of the consequences of this type philosophy, see Dallas Burdette, “We Speak Where the Bible Speaks” [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.freedominchrist.net> [accessed 9 January 2002], located under the caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under the caption HERMENEUTICS.

[21] Gustavus S. Paine, *The Men behind the King James Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 95-96.

[22] Neal Windham, *New Testament Greek: For Preachers and Teachers* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 63. I am deeply indebted to Windham for his chapter on morphemes (pp. 63-90) for this study on “Obey Them That Have the Rule Over You.”

[23] Ibid.

[24] David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 55.

[25] Ibid., 54-55.

[26] F. B. Huey, Jr. & Bruce Corley, *A Student's Dictionary for*

*Biblical & Theological Studies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 150.

[27] Again, I am indebted to David Allen Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 54.

[28] Ibid.

[29] For a detailed study of phonemes, see Windham, *New Testament Greek for Preachers and Teachers*, 63-145.

[30] For a detailed study of λυψω (luw), see Ray Summers, *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (Nashville: Broadman, 1950), 11-14.

[31] The first syllable ηΣ is pronounced “hay.” The rough breathing Σ over the long “e” (η) is transliterated as an “h” in English. The last syllable μου is pronounced “my.” Thus, the complete word is pronounced as hay gay o my.

[32] See Bruce M. Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek* (New Jersey: Theological Book Agency, 1969), 49.

[33] Harold Greenlee, *A New Testament Greek Morpheme Lexicon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), viii.

[34] Metzger, *A Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*, 49.

[35] See Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 72. Also see Greenlee, *A New Testament Greek Morpheme Lexicon*, 149-150. These two works provide an extensive collection of root words.

[36] See Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*, 66. See also Greenlee, *A New Testament Greek Morpheme Lexicon*, 104.

[37] Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 73-75.

[38] Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*, 51. See also Greenlee, *A New Testament Greek Morpheme Lexicon*, 161 for a detailed lists of word formations that contain the Greek root αϋρχ.

[39] See Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear Greek—English New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1969).

[40] For an analysis of Galatians 1:6-9, see Dallas Burdette, “The Heart of the Gospel” [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.freedominchrist.net> [accessed 3 January 2002], located under MISAPPLIED/TWISTED SCRIPTURES.

[41] First Person, plural, present, active, indicative, from κυριευω kurieuw.

[42] Third person, plural, present, active, indicative, from κατακυριευω katakurieuw.

[43] Third person, plural, present, active, indicative, from κατεξουσιαζω katexousiazw.

[44] See William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 307.

[45] First person, singular, present, middle, indicative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[46] Second person, singular, present, active, indicative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[47] *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.

[48] *The Contemporary English [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995 by the American Bible Society.

[49] I know of one brother who became so dogmatic about his interpretation of Scriptures that he eventually had to disfellowship even his wife since she did not agree with him concerning many of his odd interpretations.

[50] When the pope speaks *ex cathedra*, he is speaking with the full authority of the pope; in other words, he is one who is sitting on the seat of authority. Many religious leaders today assume that they too speak with full authority since they are sitting in the seat of authority. This philosophy is totally against the teachings of Jesus and His apostles.

[51] W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 438.

[52] Third person, plural, aorist, active, indicative—from πειψθω (peiqw).

[53] Third person, plural, imperfect, middle, indicative—from πειψθω (peiqw).

[54] Present active, participle, masculine, singular, nominative—

from *πειψθω* (*peiqw*).

[55] Second person, singular, present, active, indicative—from *πειψθω* (*peiqw*).

[56] Present, active, participle, masculine, singular, nominative—from *πειψθω* (*peiqw*).

[57] Present, passive, infinitive—from *πειψθω* (*peiqw*).

[58] Rudolf Bultmann, “*Πειψθω*” in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and trans. By Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:4.

[59] Verb: second person, plural, present, active, and imperative—from *ὑπακούψω* (*&upakouw*, “obey”)

[60] See William Hersey Davis, *Beginner’s Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1923), 166-170 for an excellent treatment of the imperative mood. Also see William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 302-310.

[61] Second person, singular, first aorist, imperative, from *τηρεψω* threw.

[62] Verb: second person, singular, aorist, active, imperative—from *διψδωμι* (*didwmi*).

[63] The Classical Greek period embraces the centuries from Homer (c 900 BCE) to the Alexandrian conquests (c 300 BCE). In this stage the Attic dialect secured dominance. The Greek literature that has come down to this century is predominantly Attic. Attic was the molding force in all the subsequent developments of the Greek language. It constituted the chief basis of New Testament Greek.

[64] See Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., *The Complete Biblical Library Series, The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary* (Springfield, Missouri: World Library Press), s.v. “3844, *πειψθω* (*peiqw*), verb,” 15:124.

[65] Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek—English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 1353-1354.

[66] See Gilbrant, *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary*, 15:124.

[67] Perfect passive participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from *πειθω*, *peiqw*.

[68] First person plural, perfect passive indicative, from *πειθω*, *peiqw*.

[69] Third person plural, first aorist, passive, indicative, from πειθω, peiqw.

[70] First aorist, active, participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from πειθω, peiqw.

[71] Present, active, participle, nominative, singular, singular, from πειθω, peiqw.

[72] Third person, singular, imperfect, active, indicative, from πειθω, peiqw.

[73] Verb: present, active, participle, masculine, singular, nominative.

[74] Second person, singular, present, active, indicative—“to persuade, to have confidence,” from πειθω, peiqw.

[75] Present, active, participle, masculine, plural, dative, from αςπειθειψω apeiqw.

[76] Present, middle, participle, dative, plural, masculine, from πειψθω peiqw.

[77] Second perfect, active, participle, nominative, plural, masculine, from πειψθω peiqw.

[78] Second perfect active infinitive, from πειψθω peiqw.

[79] Present, middle, infinitive, from πειψθω peiqw.

[80] First person plural, present active indicative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[81] First person singular, perfect passive indicative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[82] By Rudolph Bultmann, “πειψθω” peiqw,” in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:1.

[83] Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible words* (Grand Rapids: Regency/Zondervan, 1985, 461-62.

[84] W. E. Vine, “Governor,” *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 276-78.

[85] For an excellent discussion of these ages, see David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 143-169; Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927, reprint 1964), 5-15.

[86] See Thoralf Gilbrant, International Editor, “2215. ἡΣγεμωὺν Jhgemwn,” in *The Complete Biblical Library: Greek-English Dictionary, Zeta-Kappa 2176-2947*, (Springfield, Missouri: The Complete Biblical Library, 1990), 41.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., 43

[90] Ibid.

[91] Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, new edition, revised and augmented by Sir Henry Stuart Jones (Great Britain: Clarendon Press, 1973), 763.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 344.

[94] *The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

[95] *The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

[96] Darrell L. Bock, “New Testament Word Analysis,” in Scot McKnight, ed., *Introducing New Testament Interpretation: Guide to New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 103.

[97] David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 122-123. His chapter on “Semantics: Determining Meaning” is one of the best treatments that I have read, see pages 120-142.

[98] Present, middle, participle, accusative, plural, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[99] Present, middle, participle, genitive, plural, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[100] Present, middle, participle, dative, plural, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[101] Present, middle, participle, accusative, plural, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[102] Present, middle, participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[103] Present, middle, participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai. The NIV translates the participle as “the one who rules,” but this could also be translated as “the one who leads.” See Clean L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zonervan, 1998), 166, write: “ηΣγουψμενö pres. mid, (dep.) part. ΗΣγεψομαι (# 2451) to lead, to be the leader. Part. As subst.”

[104] First person, singular, perfect, passive, indicative, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[105] Third person, singular, first aorist, middle, indicative, from ηΣγεψομαι jJhgeomai.

[106] F. Buschse, “ΣηΣγεψομαι,” in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 2:907.

[107] Ray Stedman, *Hebrews*, The IVP Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1992), 156-157.

[108] See Gustavus S. Paine, *The Men Behind the King James Version* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977) for an excellent treatment of the philosophy and power of bishops behind the King James Version.

[109] See F. B. Huey, Jr. and Bruce Corley, “Dynamic Equivalence,” *A Student’s Dictionary for Biblical & Theological Studies: A Handbook of Special and Technical Terms* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1983), 67, where they write:



**DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE.** A type of translation in which the message of the biblical text is conveyed to the reader with effect equivalent to that for the original reader; closer to a paraphrase and contrasted with formal equivalence.

[110] Beekman and Callow, *Translating the Word of God*, 163.

[111] Collocation has to do with placing words together in a proper order—arrange. In other words, collocate means to place side by side. For a thorough analysis of collocation, see John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 160-174.

[112] *Ibid.*, 163.

[113] W. E. Vine, “Obedience, Obedient, Obey,” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 438.

[114] *Ibid.*, 97.

[115] See Rudolph Bultmann, “Πειψθω” in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., trans. By Geoffrey Bromiley, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol.s, 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 6:4.

[116] Second person, plural, present, middle, imperative, from πειψθω peiqw.

[117] See Millard J. Erickson, “Diachronic semantics,” *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 43, where he defines diachronic semantics: “**Diachronic semantics.** Semantical or linguistic study which emphasizes development through periods of time.”

[118] One may think this an insignificant point, but in the early 1990s, a first cousin of mine, related to me a strange custom among some one-cup and non-Sunday school churches in which the congregation insisted upon a chair next to the communion table. This odd fellowship was referred to as “the sitting down Church of Christ.” Since the KJV translated the Greek word for “recline” as “sat down,” this group wanted to follow the so-called “pattern theology” of prescribed rituals for a worship service. In other words, according to many believers, God ordained a blue-print for every act performed on Sunday morning.

, passive, infinitive, from πειψθω peiqw.

[120] Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of Holy Scripture* (Edinburgh 1839; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 404 (page reference is to reprint edition).

[121] L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand

Rapids: Baker, 1982), 80.

[122] Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), XIII.

[123] David Allen Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 133.

[124] *Ibid.*, 132.

[125] A synonym is a word having a meaning that is the same or nearly the same as that of another word in the same language. But no two words are identical or even so nearly identical that we could lose either without loss to the language. Every word can do something that no other word can do. For instance, synonyms for “persuasion” are: inducing, suasion, influencing, enticing, enticement, exhorting, exhortation, seducing, seduction, inveighing, inveiglement, alluring, wheeling, cajoling, cajolery, winning over, talking over or around; synonyms for “obey” are: submit, answer (to), respond, act (upon or on), bow to surrender, yield, perform, do, carry out, attend to orders, do what one is told, accept, accord, consent, do what is expected of one, do one’s duty, redeem one’s pledge, do as one says, come at call, serve, concur, accede, assent, conform, acquiesce, mind, take order, do the will of, do one’s bidding, comply, fulfill, play second fiddle, and so on.

[126] Third person, plural, present, active, indicative, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[127] Present, active, infinitive, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[128] Second person plural, present, act. Indicative, or imperative, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[129] Second person plural, present, act. Indicative, or imperative, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[130] Present, active, participle, dative, plural, masculine, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[131] Third person, singular, first aorist, active, indicative, from υΣπακουψω Jupakouw.

[132] Second person, plural, active, imperative, from υΣπειψκω Jupeikw.

[133] W. E. Vines, “OBEDIENCE, OBEDIENT, OBEY,” in the *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*,

(Nashville: Nelson, 1985), 438.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Ray Stedman, *Hebrews* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity, 1992), 156-157.,

[136] Jimmy Allen, *Re-Baptism? What One Must Know To Be Born Again* (Louisiana: Howard Publishing, 1991), 236.

[137] See Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 84, where they write:

Ignoring the full historical and literary contexts, and often the individual narrative, people concentrate on small units only and thus miss interpretational clues. If you contextualize enough, you can make almost any part of Scripture say anything you want it to say.

[138] See the following books that issue cautions in this particular field of study: George J. Zemek, “Grammatical Analysis and Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of biblical Exposition*, ed., John MacArthur, Jr. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 154-176; Moises Silva, *Biblical Words & Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983); D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984); David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988); Darrell L. Bock, “New Testament Word Analysis,” in *Introducing New Testament Introduction*, ed., Scot McKnight (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 97-113.

[139] Rudolph Bultmann, “πειψθω,” in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vols., 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:1.

[140] Ibid., 3.

[141] Ibid., 4.

[142] *The Christian Bible: Its New Contract Writings Portion* (Mammoth Spring, AR: Christian Bible Society, 1991).

[143] Perfect, active, participle, nominative, plural, masculine, from προι;στυμι proisthmi.

[144] See Strong, #4291; Bauer, 713; Moulton-Milligan, 541; Kittel, 6:700-703; and Liddell-Scott, 1482-1483.

[145] See Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., *The Complete Biblical Library: The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary*, Pi-Rho, Word Numbers 3665-4374, # 4150 (The Complete Biblical Library: Springfield, Missouri, 1991), 303.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Perfect, active, participle, accusative, singular, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[148] First person, aorist, active, singular, indicative, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[149] Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990, 879 (page reference is to the reprint edition).

[150] Second person, aorist, active, plural, indicative, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[151] Ibid., “The Apocrypha,” 151.

[152] Perfect, active, participle, nominative, singular, masculine,, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[153] Present, middle, participle, accusative, singular, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[154] Second aorist, active, infinitive, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[155] Present, middle, participle, nominative, plural, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[156] Perfect, active, participle, nominative, plural, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[157] Present, middle, participle, nominative, singular, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi. See Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear Greek – English New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1969), where he translates: “the one taking the lead in diligence.”

[158] Present, middle, participle, accusative, plural, masculine, from προι;στημι proisthmi. Ibid., where he translates: “taking the lead.”

[159] Present, middle, infinitive, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[160] Present, middle, infinitive, from προι;στημι proisthmi.

[161] *The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

[162] *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

[163] *The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

[164] *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.

[165] Reicke, “προϊστημι,” in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and trans. By Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vols. 10, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 6:701-702

[166] See Givens Blakley, “Studies Especially for Elders,” [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.wotruth.com/elders.htm>. This series set forth the “the real role of elders and how it fits into Divine objectives,” writes Givens Blakley. Also see the following essays dealing with leadership by Dallas Burdette, “Political Power of the Pharisees and Their Oral Tradition,” “Biographical Material on the Life of R. L. Kilpatrick,” and “Kilpatrick’s Concept of Leadership” [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.freedominchrist.net> [accessed 3 January 2002], located under caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS and then under caption ELDERS. See also the following essays by Norman Parks: (1) “Jesus Versus the Eldership,” (2) “It Shall Not Be So Among You,” and (3) “Restoration & Models of the Church [On-line]. Access through Dallas Burdette’s ONLINE RESOURCES. Go to <http://www.freedominchrist.net> and then to ONLINE RESOURCES and then to ELDERS (Accessed 9 January 2002). Also see Carl Ketcherside, “That All May Be One” (written 1957) [ON LINE]. Available from <http://www.unity-in-diversity.org> (accessed 9 January 2002). Also see Carl Ketcherside, “The Legal Tangle” (written 1975, vol., 37) [ONLINE]. Available from Ibid. See also Leroy Garrett, “Pell-mell in Little Rock” (Restoration Review, Vol., 29, No. 4, April 1987) [ONLINE]. Available from <http://www.restorationreview.org> (accessed 9 January 2002).